

August 25th, 2017

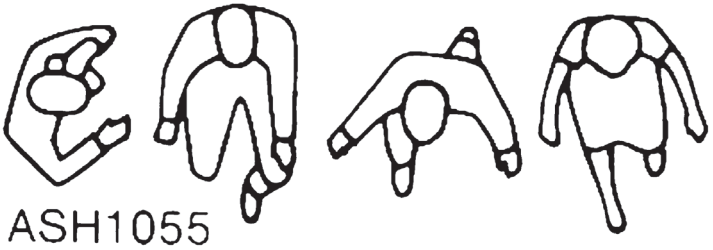
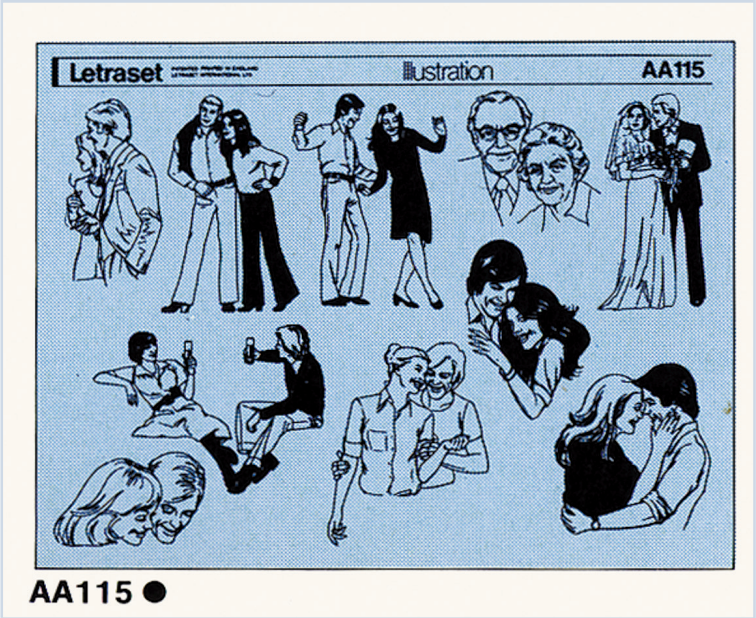
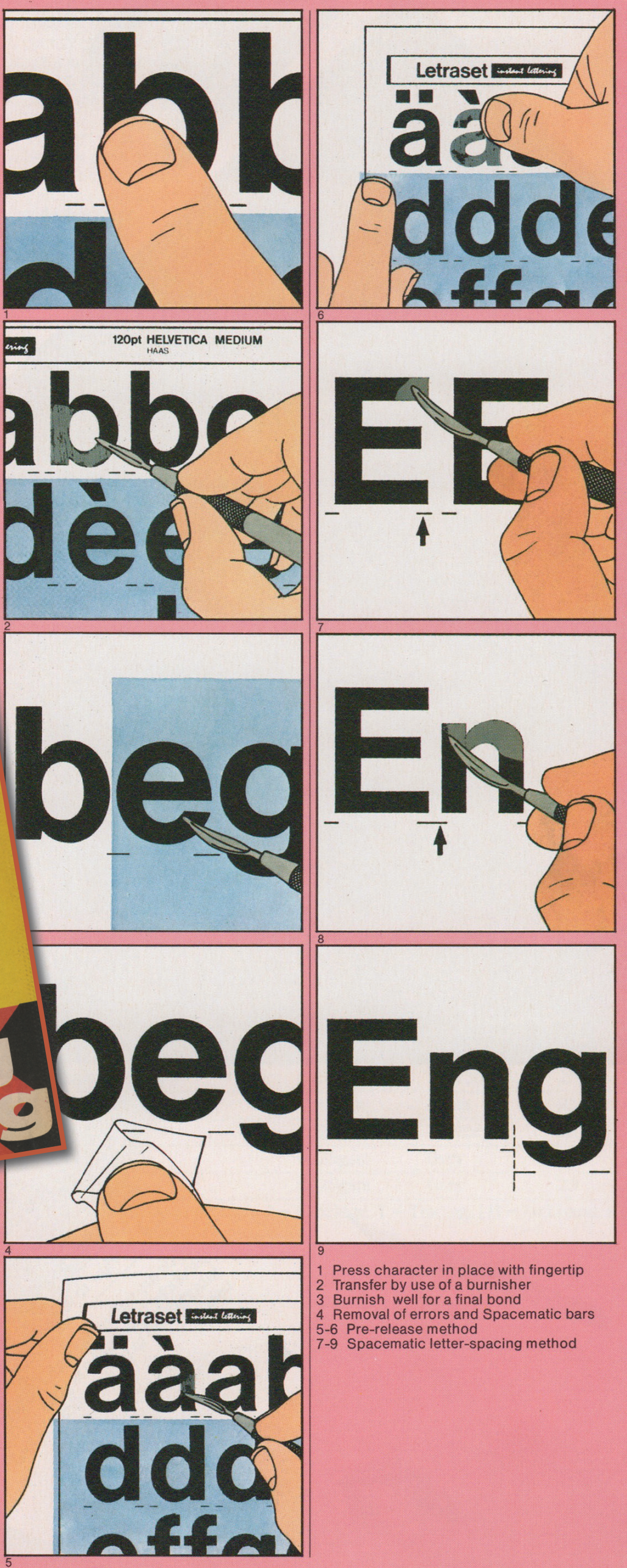
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# day PUNK IN THE PROVINCES

*It Was Easy, It Was Cheap, Go and Do It!*







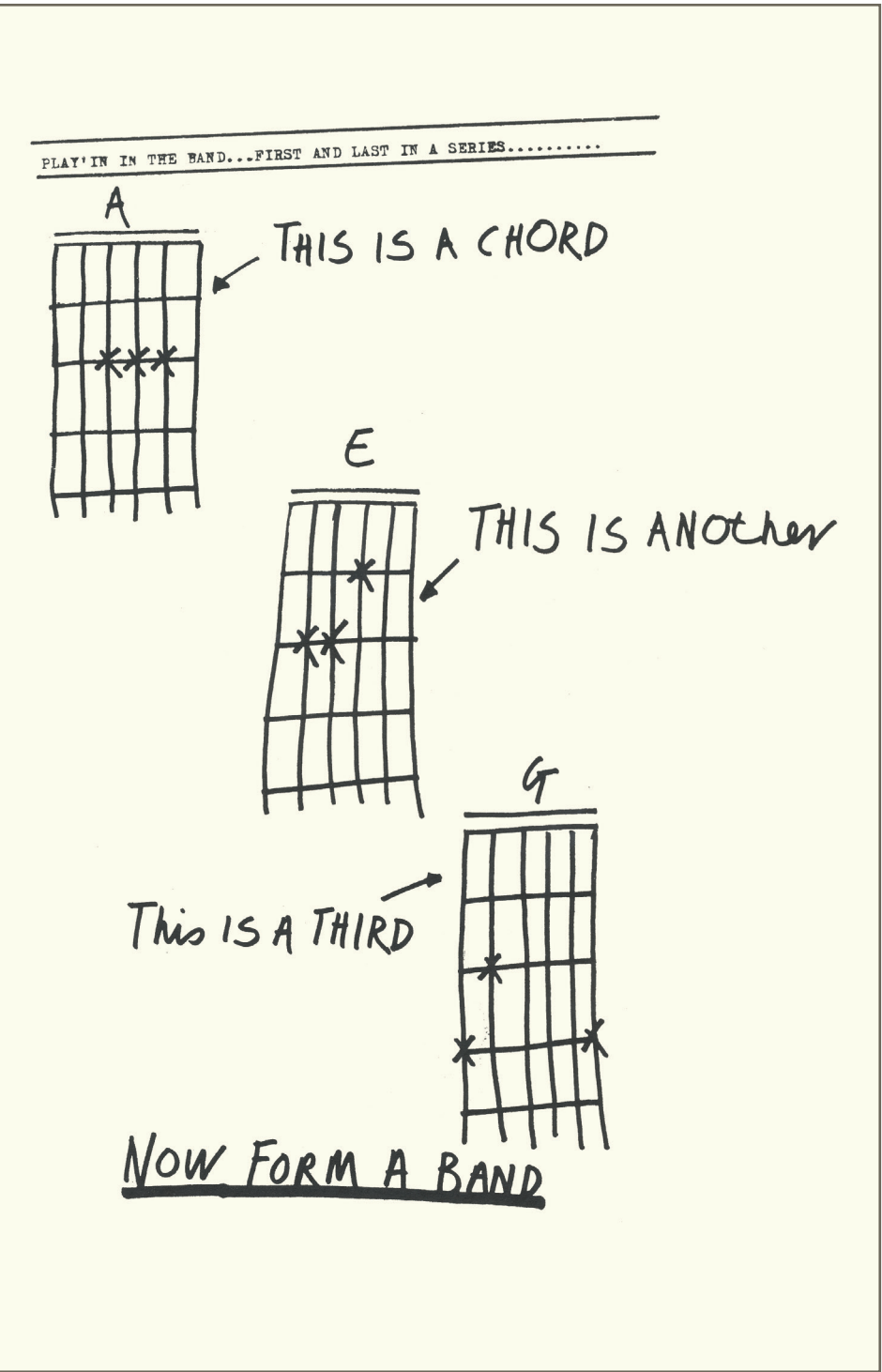
# DESIGN IT YOURSELF?

## *Punk's Division of Labour*

RUSS BESTLEY

BY THE TIME THE CLASH RECORDED *Garageland*, their self-mythologising tribute to the raw power of impassioned, street-level, untrained rock 'n' roll, punk's 'anyone can do it' call to arms was in full swing. Ironically, the group had, by this time, honed their craft through months of intensive practicing and live gigs. Thus, the resulting album track was a relatively polished and professional piece of work. The 'entry level' for budding punk performers was set quite high, and it was not until other groups and individuals took the baton and ran with it that a more 'authentic' form of DIY punk was to emerge. The Mekons, Spizztil, Television Personalities, Swell Maps, the Slits, Siouxsie & the Banshees and others were at the vanguard of this development, turning a rhetorical position into a literal reading of punk's promise. In many cases having no formal training or background in music, these groups took up the challenge, sharing an enthusiasm and self-confidence that outweighed any disadvantages stemming from inexperience. The move from DIY punk performance to the production of punk recordings, however, was to prove more problematic. Rehearsals, songwriting and live gigs could be managed, as long as the musicians involved had access to some rudimentary instruments and a space in which to perform, but the step up to creating punk records would involve more professional resources beyond the immediate scope of many involved.

The impact of home made, DIY activity on the record manufacturing process mirrors that of the marketing and distribution aspects of the subculture. Groups could set up their own label, selling direct to customers at



*Play'in in the Band, Sideburns fanzine no.1, December 1976. Design by Tony Moon.*

gigs or by mail order, but they were largely at the mercy of a national distribution system, together with long-established procedures for music publishing, promotion and marketing, in order to reach a wider audience. This process changed incrementally over the following decade, with the success (and subsequent collapse) of the Cartel independent distribution network, but the rhetoric of empowerment linked to punk's do-it-yourself message does require some critical interrogation, and a number of stereotypes deserve unpacking. Some early UK punk groups made notable attempts to open up the process and practicalities of production to others – including the Desperate Bicycles, Scritti Politti and Television Personalities. More generally, the sense of enabling a subcultural take-over of the means of production was limited to areas such as fanzines or flyers, or was simply a stylistic gesture that has become a fairly lazy received trope.

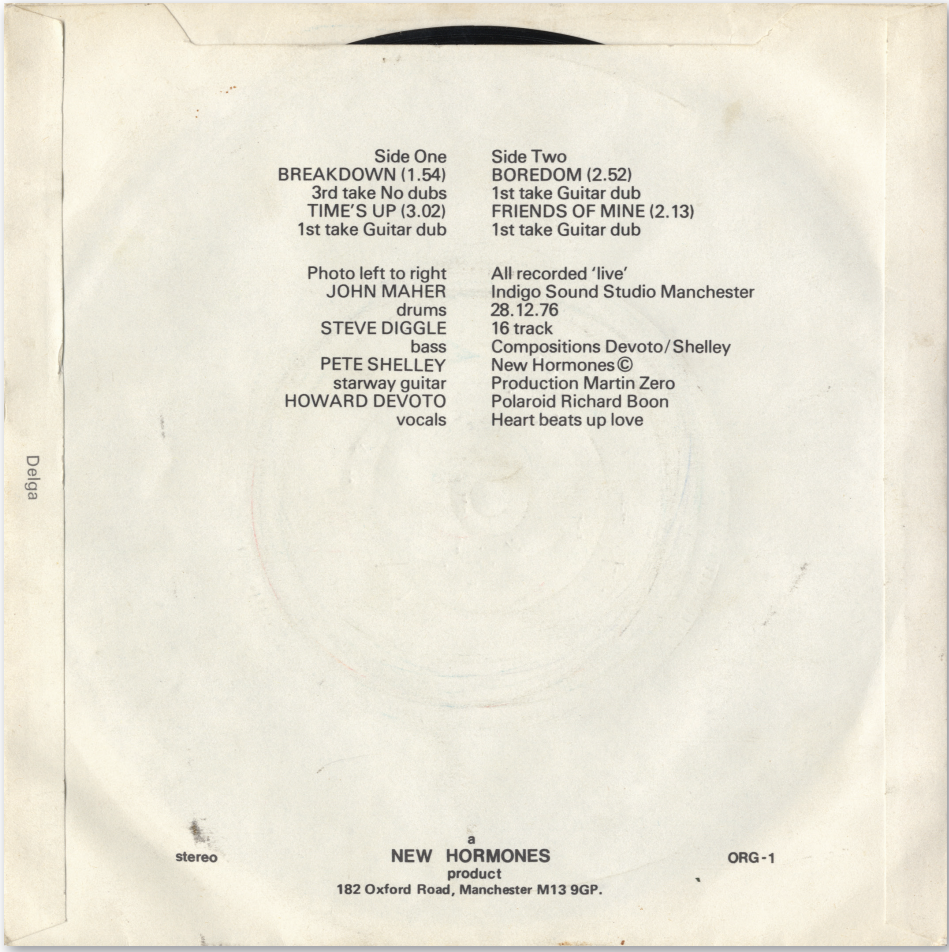
### **This is a Chord ...**

During the early period of punk's formation as a subculture, a number of themes emerged that were to become central to what might be called a punk ideology. These included a break with the past, particularly in relation to the music industry and what was seen as the increasing elitism and complexity of rock music as a form, along with notions of honesty and authenticity (both of which are problematic, of course), a rejection of authority and the empowerment of individuals. The twin phrases 'anyone can do it' and 'do-it-yourself' were to become something of a punk mantra, tied to a vision of independence from the mainstream music industry.





Buzzcocks *Spiral Scratch* EP (New Hormones 1977). Design by Richard Boon.



Buzzcocks *Spiral Scratch* EP (New Hormones 1977) (back cover). Design by Richard Boon.

None of this was new, of course – the hippie era had seen the growth of do-it-yourself publishing throughout Europe and the US, with musicians taking up the challenge to record, produce and release their own material, with varying degrees of direct, hands-on involvement. In the US, the Grateful Dead and the Sun Ra Arkestra recorded and released literally hundreds of albums, many on their own labels, while in the UK the Deviants self-released their debut album, *Ptooff!* in 1968 and distributed it through ‘underground music’ retailers, as well as via mail-order ads in *OZ* and *International Times*. Other late hippie groups including Here and Now and the Edgar Broughton Band were renowned for their approach to direct action and attitude toward independent production.

It should also be noted that the punk do-it-yourself concept also applied to a range of creative practices, from fashion to photography and film, though widespread DIY efforts in dress have been largely unacknowledged in relation to the expensive punk high fashion items designed by Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren. Museums and cultural institutions collect the latter and hold them in high esteem, despite the fact that they were well beyond the reach of most participants in the punk subculture. DIY fashion assemblages – what Hebidge describes as bricolage – formed the mainstay of punk dress styles, along with cheaper imitations of punk ‘high fashion’ styles, and much like the music, debates about authenticity and the commercialisation of punk are longstanding.

Tony Moon’s classic three-chord diagram entitled *Play’in in the Band*,

*“All you kids out there who read ‘SG’, don’t be satisfied with what we write. Go out and start your own fanzines or send reviews to the established papers. Let’s really get on their nerves, flood the market with punk-writing!”*  
Mark P, *Sniffin’ Glue* no.5, November 1976

published in *Sideburns* fanzine no.1, December 1976, has become something of a visual cliché in relation to DIY and punk. While Mark Perry was encouraging others to write about the new scene in the pages of *Sniffin’ Glue*, Moon set out to promote a new generation of active participants and musicians under the punk banner. But this sense of empowerment in punk’s call to take up arms (or instruments, in this case), throw off our shackles (lack of skill, training or expertise) and become a performer (or artist, writer, film maker, journalist, photographer or whatever) has become, in retrospect, over-inflated and hyperbolic. A rigid and stylised narrative has taken hold, offering ‘authentic’ attributes to punk’s early pioneers through their re-assertion of personal agency and control over their art, and their rejection of mainstream, capitalist models of production. This is a rather disingenuous argument, and closer scrutiny of the actual output of a wide range of punk musicians may help us to unpack some of the truths behind the rhetoric.

The debut EP by Buzzcocks, *Spiral Scratch*, was released at the end of January 1977. The record was funded by the group themselves from a number of loans,

including £250 from guitarist Pete Shelley’s father, and a deal was arranged by manager Richard Boon for the pressing of the record at Phonogram. *Spiral Scratch* was noted as the first UK independent punk record, and the widespread critical acclaim that it afforded (along with a high degree of subsequent free publicity) ensured both the record’s success and the broader circulation of a do-it-yourself idea. *Spiral Scratch* quickly sold out its initial pressing of 1,000 copies and went on to eventually sell 16,000 before being officially deleted when the band signed to United Artists in August 1977. The record’s back cover, designed by manager Richard Boon, also featured an unusual level of information relating to its recording, listing which particular studio take of each song was featured, along with brief details of any overdubs. However, it is hard to discern how this information was particularly useful as a kind of ‘route map’ for others to follow in the realization of their own DIY record ambitions.

Overall, the commercial (batch) production of punk records right across the span of early UK punk, from DIY to major label releases, was largely handled

by professionals – from cutting studios and pressing plants, to printers and sleeve manufacturers – although some aspects of the graphic design and packaging process were taken in-house by groups themselves. Meanwhile, the debut Scritti Politti release, the *Skank Bloc Bologna* EP (2,500 copies, released November 1978) listed details of costs of production and service providers utilised by the group for record pressing and packaging:

RECORDING ... £98.00  
Spaceward Studios,19, Victoria St.  
Cambridge (0223)64263.  
14hrs. Cost includes master tape.

MASTERING ... £40.00  
Pye London Studios.17,Gt.Cumberland  
Place,W1. 01.262 5502. or IBC.  
(George) Sound Recording Studios,  
35,Portland Place,W1.01.637 2111.  
Cutting of lacquer from Master tape.

PRESSING ... £369.36  
PYE Records(sales)Ltd.  
Western Road, Mitcham,Surrey.  
01.648 7000  
2,500 copies @ 13p & processing  
(electro plating of lacquer £27.00)

LABELS ... £8.00  
Rubber stamp on white labels  
(labels included in cost of  
pressing.) E.G.Rubber Stamps,  
28,Bridge St. Hitchin, Herts.  
(0462) 51677.

Interestingly, the costs of sleeve printing are not included in the listed information.

The cover was litho-printed in two colours (black and red) on the front and one colour (black) on the back.

Scritti’s follow-up seven-inch release, the *Work in Progress 2nd Peel Session* EP (December 1979), also included a list of production costs – this time with the folded, Xeroxed sleeve cryptically summarised as “*INSERTS – printed cheap by Beattie*”. This EP also provided a helpful song title that would come to describe a wider field of self-supported, DIY recordings in the ensuing years: Messthetics – a term that was to become synonymous with the more genuinely do-it-yourself and avant-garde fringes of independent post-punk music. The band also produced a booklet with instructions on how to make a record, based on their experience to date, in order to inspire others to do the same.

While Buzzcocks provided something of an inspirational idea for others to seek to emulate (provided they could gather together the money to do so), it was still largely just that – an idea. The group were early beneficiaries of the surge in major label interest in punk, and once signed to United Artists they provided perhaps musical inspiration, but little or nothing in terms of practical, hands-on, do-it-yourself guidance. Scritti Politti took a more proactive approach to punk DIY, openly sharing information on the costs of production for their first two seven-inch vinyl releases. However, again the extent of any ‘handmade’ processes employed were limited to folding, assembling and stapling ready-printed covers, and rubber stamping labels, with all major manufacturing elements (recording, cutting, mastering, pressing, printing etc) commissioned from professional service providers.

This isn’t to deny the impact, or the significance, of such an approach – but to seek to unpack some of the catch-all rhetoric and myth-making that has come to be widely accepted as fact in relation to the do-it-yourself maxim. While Buzzcocks certainly communicated DIY principles, through the background and context to their debut release (and associated media commentary), others such as the Desperate Bicycles went one stage further, taking a similar approach to Tony Moon in specifically encouraging others to action via the content and the medium itself, through song lyrics and graphic design strategies. 500 copies of the Desperate Bicycles debut single, *Smokescreen/Handlebars*, were released on their own Refill label in April 1977, with both songs pressed on each side of the record, apparently due to the proscriptive cost of cutting a master for two separate sides. The run-out for record at the end of *Handlebars* features a sole shouted voice – “*it was easy, it was cheap, go and do it!*”

Interviewed by Graham Lock in the *New Musical Express*, 14 October 1978, vocalist Danny Wigley summed up the Desperate Bicycles’ independent stance:



Desperate Bicycles *Smokescreen/Handlebars* (Refill Records 1977). Design by Diana Fawcett.



Desperate Bicycles *The Medium Was Tedium/Don't Back The Front* (Refill Records 1977).

“... *the biggest hurdle is just believing you’ve still got some control over your life, that you can go out and do it.*” The first pressing sold out within four months, resulting in a profit of £210. Using this money, a second pressing of 1,000 was made, which sold out in a fortnight. The profit from that was used to finance the pressing of their second release, *The Medium Was Tedium/Don't Back The Front* in July 1977. Again, both tracks were pressed on each side of the record, and it featured a lyrical continuation from their debut – the words “*it was easy, it was cheap, go and do it!*” formed

the chorus of the first song. During the final verse, Wigley voices his frustration with the hesitance of others to get involved, and to form their own bands: “*I’m sick of telling people that they’re capable too / They don’t want to believe me and there ain’t just a few...*” The song goes on to make Wigley’s ambitions to inform, educate and spur others to action clear, communicated now more as a form of instruction to the listener, rather than a self-reflective narrative; “*So if you can understand / Go and join a band. It was easy, it was cheap, go and do it!*” As the notes on the back sleeve

of their second single suggest, the Desperate Bicycles were intent on empowering others to follow in their footsteps: “*They’d really like to know why you haven’t made your single yet... So if you can understand, go and join a band. Now it’s your turn...*”.

The Television Personalities released their debut *Where’s Bill Grundy Now?* EP the same month as Scritti’s first release, with a folded sleeve also detailing costs and methods of production:

Recorded at i.p.s studio’s shepherds Bush London. Total cost £22.50 ... four hours recording. Thanks for your help Pete

Mastered at John Martin of Reading .  
Total cost of £34.00  
London Road, Binfield, Bracknell, Berks  
Telephone 0344 54935.

Records pressed at Lyntone,  
Prices now increased, approx. 14p per disc,plus £25 per side for metal parts VAT  
extra Metal parts can also be made at John Martin which would probably save time.

First 2,000 sleeves by DELGA PRESS  
of Raglan Road Bromley Kent.  
£45 for plate....£65 for sleeves  
IF you have the patience you can save time  
and Money by getting cheaply produced  
printing  
Adresses in Yellow pages etc

Blank Record labels no more than £10  
thousand  
PPrinted labels £40-£50 per thousand.

Records distributed by ROUGH TRADE  
(HI GEOFF) SMALL WONDER  
(HELLO PETER AND MARI) (HIPPIES)  
BONAPARTE, VIRGIN, LIGHTNING.  
BYE BYE

The record was reissued in conjunction with independent label Rough Trade in 1979, again with production details on the back of the sleeve. This second pressing updated the technical information and costs:

PRESSED AT LYNTONE  
1ST 1,000 £213  
FURTHER 1,000’s £140  
LABELS TOO EXPENSIVE

MASTERED BY COUNTY  
RECORDING, BERKS. £34.

RECORDED  
AT I.P.S. SHEPHERDS BUSH.  
AUGUST 26/1978  
COST £22.50

Sleeves 2,000 £110  
BY DELGA, KENT  
WE DIDN’T WANT TO  
BUT WHAT ELSE DO WE DO?

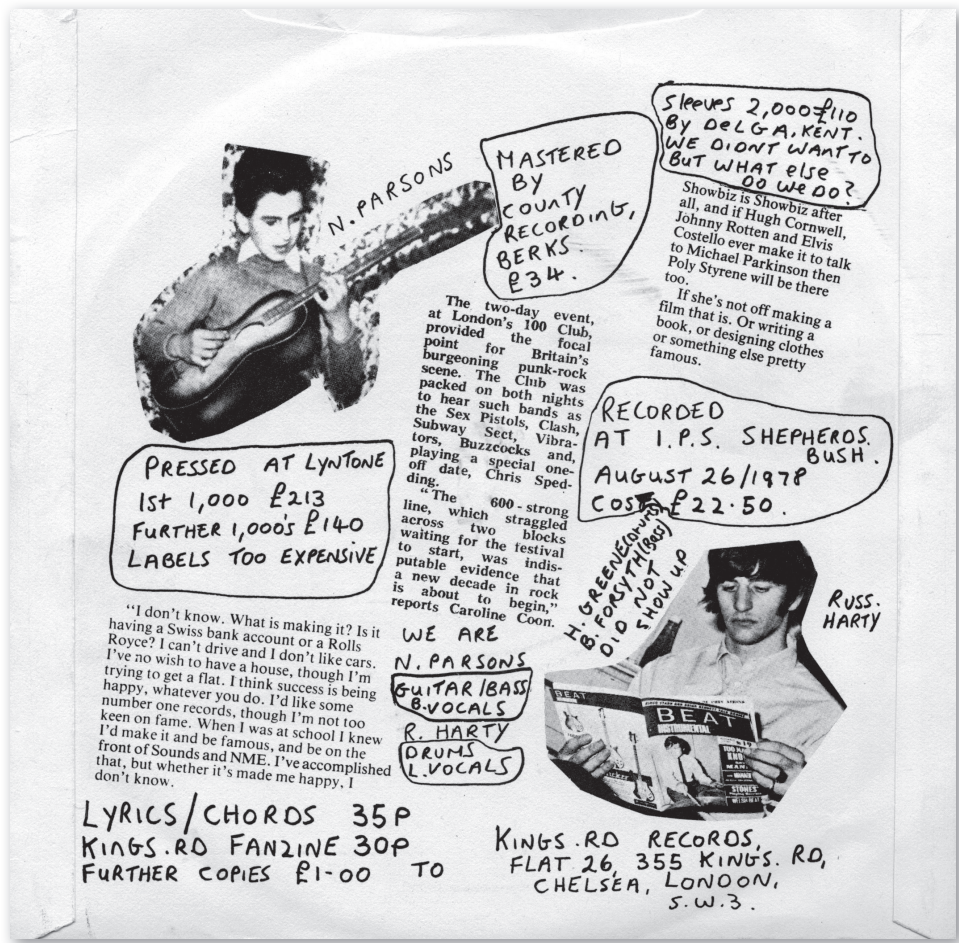


The paradox of having to produce picture sleeves for the EP is very apparent here. The independent punk record market was booming, and since the earliest days of the movement, groups and labels recognised the demand for both picture sleeves and limited edition records (notably coloured vinyl editions, short production runs in picture covers, or low-price first batches of a release). Since the Television Personalities' own approach was deeply critical of developing punk conventions (or clichés), the 'double bind' of having to produce a picture sleeve is especially ironic. On top of that, the cost of manufacturing picture sleeves far outweighed the cost of recording or mastering the record, and almost paralleled the cost of pressing.

### This is Another...

The independent sector grew strongly between 1978 and 1984, in particular benefiting from the widening market for punk and avant-garde post-punk records in the late 1970s. Independent labels successfully captured the early 1980s punk market, while the major labels turned to the promotion of new styles and a broader audience. Low overheads, and the ability to produce short runs of records that were both cost effective and audience specific, allowed the smaller independents to operate in this specialist market much more easily than the majors, who relied on mass production and distribution, and a high turnover of their product. The new independent labels were, however, limited in terms of access to manufacturing processes, and reliant in many cases on established music industry models.

The process of professional graphic design in this period could be described as in some ways collaborative. The designer's activities would be based on a process of specification, whereby other skilled professionals in what was termed 'art production' (such as phototypesetters, metal type compositors, illustrators, photoengravers and platemakers, printers and print finishers) would be given detailed instructions in order to achieve the desired results. The crucial stage of the pre-press process involved the making of film separations for platemaking: this was the point where a prototype one-off was converted to a mass produced artefact. Such pre-press operations were usually, though not always, owned by printers as a front end to their activities, and were much more advanced technologically than artwork production houses, using a combination of photographic processes and very precise manual procedures. Technicians would use parallel motion light box drawing boards to 'comp together' film negative separations of various types (halftone images, line work, halftone mechanical tint screens), which could then be produced as plates for the various colour separations on the printing press. The designer would supply the pre-press departments with a variety of origination (line work and continuous tone



Television Personalities *Where's Bill Grundy Now?* EP (second pressing) (Kings Road Records/Rough Trade 1979) (back cover). Design by Television Personalities.

*“It was the Desperate Bicycles that gave us the incentive. ‘If you’re thinking of making a tape why not go the whole way and make a record?’ they said.”*

## Green Gartside, Sounds, January 1979

work), usually with line work (type, line illustration, brush work and rules) in situ, and with only keyline indications of colour areas and images to be placed by the artwork department.

A significant aspect of the translation of the artwork to film separations, and hence to printed proof, was in communicating to the individuals involved exactly how to assemble the various parts supplied by the designer. These instructions were usually written and drawn onto tracing paper overlays to the artwork, which were registered and held in place with pins or tape. The graphic designer's role was to plan, predict and specify required outcomes, rather than to originate them in their entirety by craft at the drawing board stage. While some skilled designers could make use of the flexibility offered by such pre-press tools as the PMT camera, most design studios were more limited in terms of the technology available, and economy of scale meant that such facilities were more often than not reserved for major artwork departments, rather than acting as a design 'tool' for production. One key distinction between the professional designer and amateur and DIY producers was in their detailed knowledge of the range of pre-press artwork processes and specification techniques available. Punk sleeve design was in part technologically driven, with artwork often reflecting the

availability of materials, together with the skills and training (or lack of such) of the designer.

### This is a Third...

So, what are the visual and graphic conventions of DIY punk and post-punk? Are they performative and formally designed, displaying the lo-tech or handmade nature of their construction, or are they a rhetorical call-to-arms, with a sense of shared participation for the viewer or user? Is do-it-yourself simply a background context for the record (important though that may be), or is it the key element of the message itself? What is key here is the notion of making explicit the means of production – allowing the form and content of the message to be self-reflexive, the medium is the message in a very literal sense.

This distinction between professional and amateur design extends beyond the production of camera-ready paste-up artwork for professional reproduction. Some DIY sleeve designers chose to print, as well as design, their sleeves, thus taking the entire production process in-house. This strategy led to the creation of some extremely simple sleeves, as in the basic, black and white, one-sided Xerox copies produced for the single *Hypocrite* by the Newtown Neurotics (No Wonder 1979), *Last Bus to Debdon* EP by the Epileptics (Spiderleg 1981), *God's Got Religion* by the Fifty Fantastics (Dining Out

1980) and the *Don't Feed Us Shit* EP by Icon A.D. (Radical Change 1982). In comparison, the silkscreen printed coloured stripes on the Manchester Mekon single *Not Forgetting* (Newmarket Records 1979) required access to more technical equipment (a silkscreen print facility), but the sleeve was even simpler in its design. Three stripes were screen-printed directly onto standard white, plain paper record bags, which were already factory folded and glued, with the reverse printed in one colour. The omission of any text or image on the sleeve itself means that factors such as registration or tone and contrast (and hence readability) are unimportant – textual information (such as titles and catalogue number) is included on the professionally-printed centre labels, and on a separate photocopied insert.

The silkscreen printing process is quite labour-intensive, and large batches of prints in more than one colour, particularly where accurate registration is required, demand a great deal of time. This tends to make anything more than a very short run not economically viable, or in the case of home-made sleeves, something of a labour of love. Simple silkscreen printed sleeves include the Adicts *Lunch With The Adicts* EP (Dining Out 1979), Disco Zombies *Here Come The Buts* (Dining Out 1980) and Blank Students *We Are Natives* (Dexter Records 1980), which were all printed in one colour on a folded piece of card. Access to silkscreen print technology could lead to more elaborate and sophisticated sleeve designs, although the mechanical problems of cutting, folding and glueing sleeves meant that many DIY producers chose to print on a 14" x 7" flat piece of card, folded and wrapped around the record – which was usually housed in a separate white inner bag. The record and sleeve would normally then be inserted in a plastic cover: without this there was nothing to stop them becoming detached. This form of simple packaging was to be widely imitated, and still continues across the range of DIY releases to this day.

One highly elaborate DIY production, a package for the single *Max Bygraves Killed My Mother* by the Atoms (Rinka Records 1979), included two separate seven inch square, silkscreen printed front and back cards, together with screen-printed sticky centre labels to glue to the record, and a number of printed, photocopied and handwritten postcards and inserts – all contained in a PVC sleeve. This level of detail and hand-made material would be very difficult, and uneconomical, to achieve with a large-scale release, and such excesses were generally limited to small-scale independent labels.

The fact that many DIY sleeves were produced by amateur designers does not mean that they were uninventive. The debut single by ...and the Native Hipsters, *There Goes Concorde Again* (Heater Volume 1980) used a number of hand-crafted materials, though in this case the coloured pattern on the sleeve was created by cutting out 14" x 7" folded sections



The Atoms *Max Bygraves Killed My Mother* (Rinka Records 1979). Design by Keith Allen.

from large sheets of printed billboard material. Each sleeve was unique – the group rubber-stamped the record centre labels and added a small photocopied name label to the front of the sleeve, together with a photocopied insert. Once again, this 'wraparound' sleeve was housed in a PVC record sleeve, in order to keep the individual elements together. This use of found or pre-used material was mirrored in other designs, such as the debut album by Warsaw Pakt (itself something of a critically-acclaimed publicity stunt, having been recorded, mixed, cut to vinyl, packaged and distributed within 24 hours), which used a cardboard record mailing envelope as a sleeve, decorated with stickers and rubber stamps.

The impact of do-it-yourself activity on the record manufacturing process was mirrored in the marketing and distribution aspects of the subculture: groups could set up their own label, and could sell direct to customers either locally (at gigs or via local outlets) or by mail order, but they were largely at the mercy of a national distribution system, together with long-established procedures for music publishing, promotion and marketing, in order to reach a wider audience. There is, therefore, a distinct division of labour in the production of punk records, and the 'anyone can do it' DIY ethos of punk could only have a nominal impact on this range of activities.

Similarly, while the design of the sleeve could be taken on by untrained members or friends of the group, the actual printing, folding and glueing was often left to the services of a professional print studio. The fact that such a high proportion of punk sleeves were professionally printed, together with the widespread adoption of record industry 'norms' such as the inclusion of a group photograph on the front cover, locates

punk within the music industry once more. Although innovations did occur, and the punk avant-garde found new directions in both musical and visual aesthetics, links to other earlier, and contemporary, popular music genres were still very much in evidence. Whether these links were self-regulated, in that punk groups wished to emulate their own rock music heroes, or imposed, in that the industry itself adopted punk as simply another new music development to profit from, it is clear that punk's 'year zero' approach was not to overturn the entire music business, and the famous punk call-to-arms by The Clash; "... *no Elvis, Beatles or Rolling Stones in 1977*" was ultimately to prove empty rhetoric.

Interestingly, some of the limitations of do-it-yourself and low tech production within the burgeoning independent scene were a source of critical self-reflection (or even embarrassment), as well as assertive positioning on the part of producers. While he denies his group wanting to sound or look like the Sex Pistols or The Clash, preferring to forge their own individual punk identity, Kev Lycett of Leeds group the Mekons, who released their debut single, *Never Been In A Riot* on the Fast Product label in February 1978, recalls a sense of naivety with regard to the recording process; "...*back in those days no-one knew anything about recording and we thought that just the fact of making a record would result in a record that sounded like a 'proper' record. It was a profound shock to hear such a 'crap' sounding thing and we were all too embarrassed to play it to any one for a long time. We wanted it to sound like a 'real' record!*". In retrospect, the record is widely recognised as something of a punk 'classic' because of its simplicity and the impression of a group struggling with their instruments, but the



Manchester Mekon *Not Forgetting* (Newmarket Records 1979). Design by Manchester Mekon.

distinction between group or individual aspirations and the reality of recording and manufacturing a record is crucial to an understanding of the genre. Interestingly, the initial sense of disappointment was also reflected in the group's impression of the single sleeve when it was finally released; "...*at the time I thought it was the crappiest single cover I had ever seen and was bitterly disappointed to see such an ugly, inept thing wrapping my first single!*".

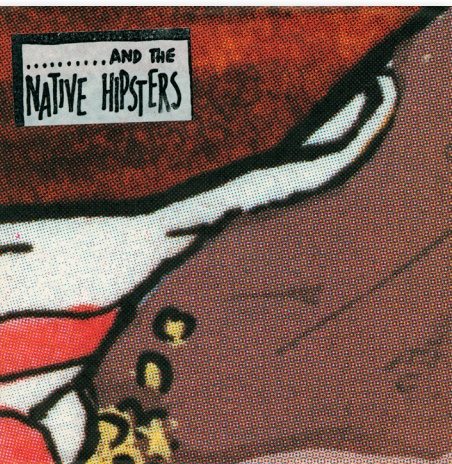
### Now Form a Band...

This does lead us to something of a conundrum. Punk's do-it-yourself philosophy certainly did open up the market to new and innovative ideas, new labels and business practices, and a new generation of entrepreneurs – some of whom invested their time, money and effort in a participatory and democratic fashion, not in the pursuit of profit but simply as a self-sustaining contribution to the scene. While the demystification of the process of production can be seen as spreading the word and embodying a punk DIY ideology, it can be argued that in some ways these examples do little more than pay lip service to the notion of 'doing-it-yourself', and are rather more clearly examples of simply 'buying-it-yourself'. Similar issues arise in the notion of 'independence', as Barry Lazell's working definition on the establishment of an Indie Chart within the trade journal *Record Business* in January 1980 suggests – in order to be classed as independent, records had to be "*independently distributed: produced, manufactured, marketed and put into the shops without recourse to the major record companies...*".

However, at least until new technologies evolved for recording, reproducing and distributing music, the early pioneers of do-

it-yourself punk were to be forever hampered by access to, and ownership of, the means of production. Technological change was around the corner, bringing firstly access to cheap and fairly simple home recording and duplication equipment (the cassette recorder, followed by the multi-track tape recorder in the mid-80s), and subsequently digital technologies that took music distribution away from physical formats altogether. Perhaps the time-lag between the ambition of doing-it-yourself and the widespread availability of technologies that allow full artistic control, from the initial idea to final communication and reception, has softened the pioneering spirit of the early DIY punk artists. The manifestos, messages of empowerment and calls-to-arms of Mark P, Tony Moon, Desperate Bicycles, Scritti Politti, Television Personalities et al were perhaps embodied in the struggle to communicate within the restrictions of the medium, and the technologies of the time. Certainly it would be good to see a contemporary take on the same theme – it's now even easier and cheaper to go and do it, though the explicit call to do so is rarely, if ever, heard.

### RUSS BESTLEY







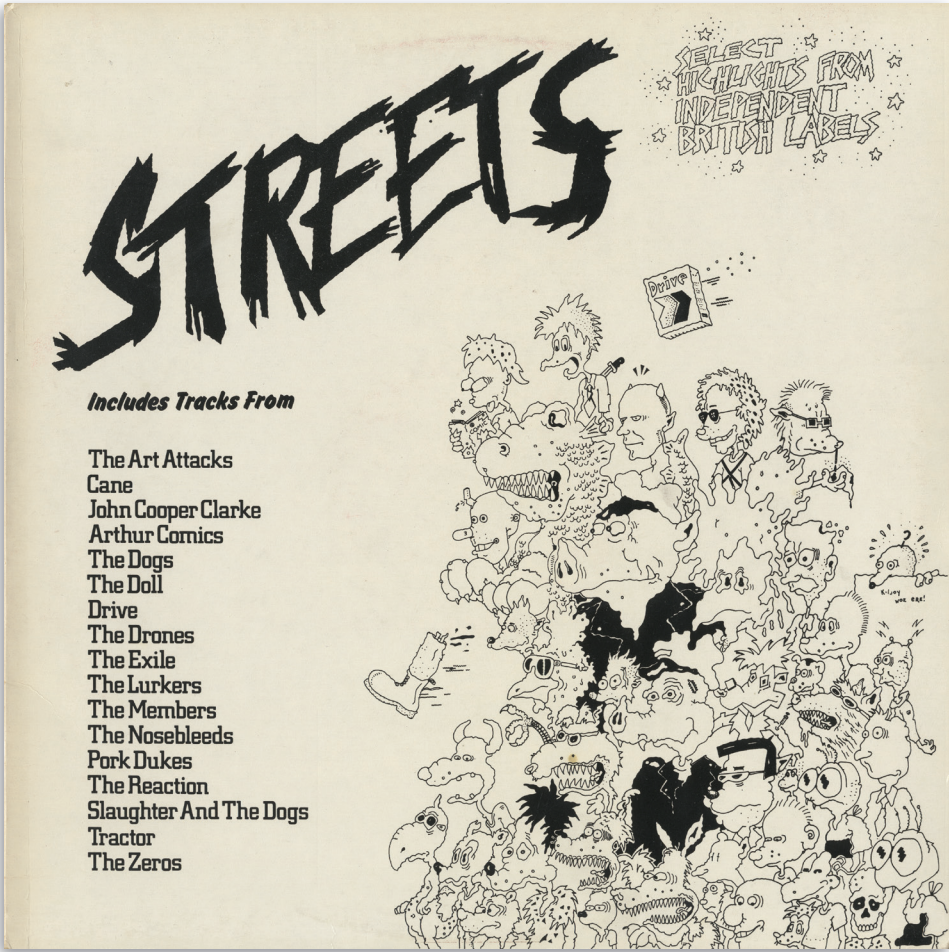
Das Schnitz 4AM/Getting Nowhere/My House (Ellie Jay Records) 1979.



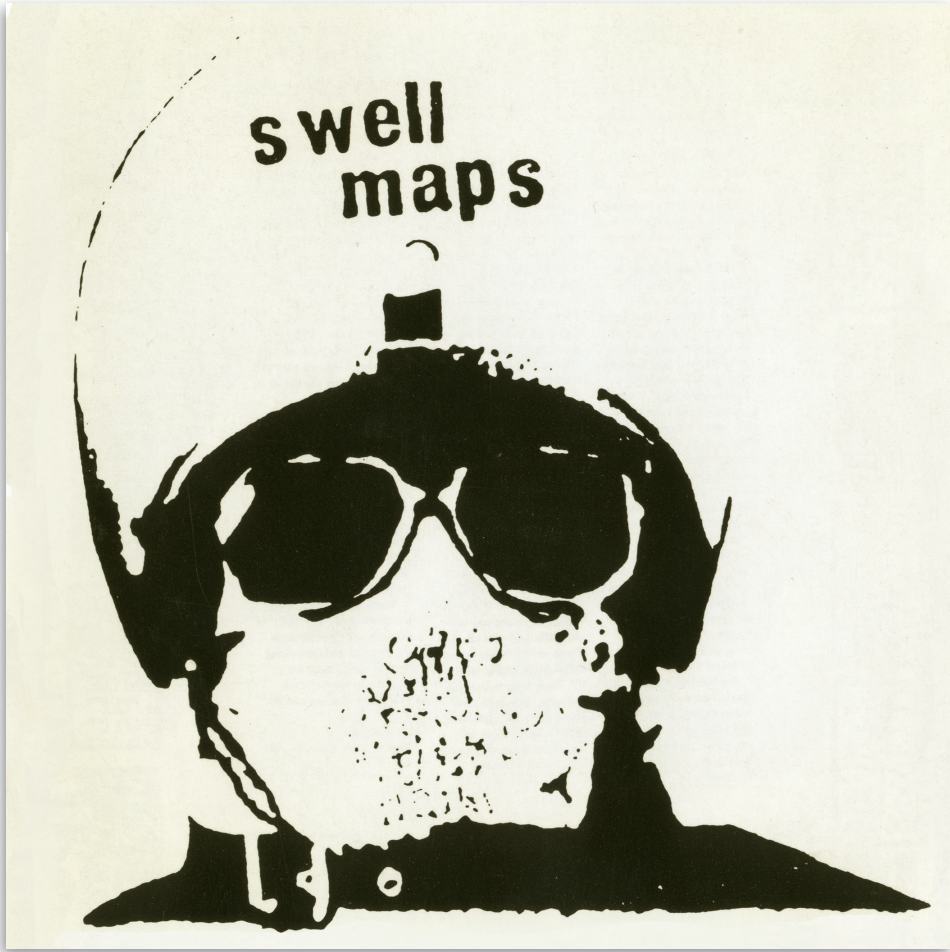
One particularly striking and original sleeve was designed by a group of teenagers from Torquay, Das Schnitz, who released one single, 4AM, on the Ellie Jay label in 1979. They couldn't afford to produce a sleeve for their record, so they decided on an unusual strategy which – unknowingly to them – took Jamie Reid's concept for the last Sex Pistols album one stage further. The group got hold of record sleeves for a range of contemporary chart releases – including singles by Chaka Khan, Darts, Chic, The Shadows and Funkadelic – and wrote their

own titles on the covers with marker pens, together with comments related to the wording on the original sleeve. Guitarist Nadi Jahangiri remembers it was a spur of the minute decision: "From what I remember, incredibly there was a stall at a local market that just sold picture sleeves in bulk from singles of the day. I can't think if he sold anything else but that's where we got the sleeves. It was purely a financial decision as there was not enough money to get our own sleeves printed. We then de-faced them one Saturday afternoon at the drummer's house." The record release did lead

to some local publicity for the group: "...the single went straight in at number two on the local chart on April 21 1979, where it stayed for a number of weeks. It was not distributed nationally." The sleeve design also gave the group some wider notoriety: "...fans and record buyers loved the idea. It meant that the band had personally been involved in a record that they had bought. Chaka Khan's record label wrote to us threatening to sue us if we carried on selling the single in her sleeve but nothing came of it."



Various Artists Streets (Beggars Banquet Records) 1977. Design by Savage Pencil.



Swell Maps Read About Seymour/Ripped And Torn/Black Velvet (Rather/Rough Trade) 1978.



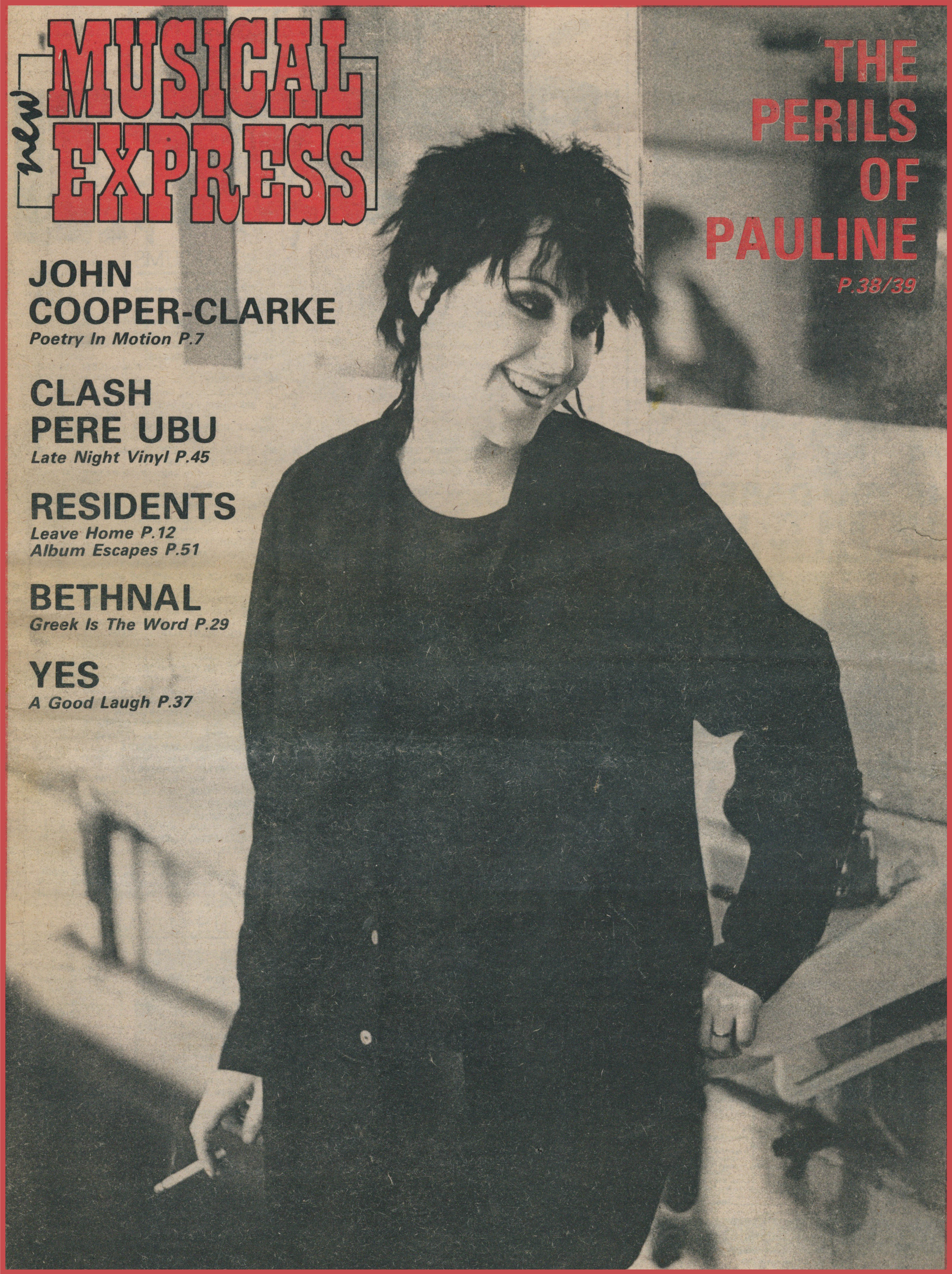
Various Artists Business Unusual (Cherry Red) 1978



Various Artists Labels Unlimited (Cherry Red) 1979







# NOSTALGIA FOR AN AGE YET TO COME

PAUL HARVEY

WHEN I WAS RESEARCHING my PhD a few years ago (now published online under the title *Stuckism, Punk Attitude and Fine Art Practice: parallels and similarities*) I was looking for ways to relate my experience of being a Punk in those formative years of 1976-79 to the experience of being in the Stuckist art movement 25 years later. So much of what was happening to me as a Stuckist I felt had already happened to me before as a Punk. I began to wonder why this was, and suddenly a PhD thesis was developed. As the research intensified, what became important was the fact that I was a *provincial* Punk. I wasn't aware of this back in the day, as not only had the term not been coined, but I wouldn't have known what the word provincial meant anyway. In retrospect, though, it is vital when trying to understand what the vast majority of Punks felt and experienced at that time.

In December 1976, still living where I was born in Burton-upon-Trent, I heard *Anarchy in the UK*, the first single by the Punk group the Sex Pistols, and my life changed forever. I became a Punk. I very quickly formed a Punk band, having already bought my first amplifier from Woolworths.

I read about Punk in the *New Musical Express*, and travelled to the Kings Hall in Derby to watch Punk bands. I also decided to go to Art College, as I wanted to make art and play Punk. Once Punk hit, the idea of getting a normal job was not an option.

I had grown up listening to and loving popular music. By the summer of 1977, I had developed the concept, along with my immediate circle, that anything Punk was good, and anything else was bad. Tunnel vision was an element of my learning, and this quickly led to finding others in the town who shared a similar philosophy. Sometimes it was hard to find out whether bands were Punk or not, so we didn't know whether to like them: Ultravox (heavily influenced by Roxy Music, a pre-Punk glam group influenced by Pop Art) for example, and XTC (although they didn't sound or look Punk, they might be Punk because they played the Hope & Anchor, a popular pub venue in London for Punk bands, and were on the *Front Row Festival* double live album recorded at the venue). It was ok though to like bands that were not Punk, if well-known Punks said they liked them. Andy Medhurst, writing in Roger Sabin's 1999 book *Punk Rock: So What?*, shares this experience: "It

was ok to have three Van Der Graf Generator albums because Johnny Rotten said he liked their singer Peter Hammill."

The heavy-rock band Led Zeppelin were the enemy. The Punks hated the hippies. Before Punk, popular musicians had had an almost God-like status (Eric Clapton's nickname was, in fact, God). Making a record was a deeply mystical process. Progressive rock (a popular type of rock music pre-Punk) encouraged this thinking. I bought a Led Zeppelin record, but I didn't identify with it, as it said nothing to me about my life. The Jilted John album however, said everything about my life.

The thought of actually playing music on stage at that level seemed impossibly remote, but after Punk broke we felt entitled to have a go ourselves. As well as playing the music, we designed our own posters and band logos and became excited by graphic design from the covers of the singles we bought. We organized our own gigs and fought with the audience at the local tennis club. Punk was liberating. It was the realisation that we actually had a choice as to how we worked, no matter what the discipline – there was no 'right' way to do it. Technique and ability were not as important

anymore: it was attitude that counted. Above all, Punk was *practical*. It was realistic. It gave people a chance. It was great being a Punk in 1977, and I remember this time well – or at least I thought I did.

My first Punk rock gig was on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1977 – The Stranglers at Leicester De Montfort Hall. My second was The Clash at the Kings Hall, Derby. Punk bands played wherever they were allowed to, sometimes not in the most comfortable of surroundings, as Kris Needs noted in *ZigZag*, December 1977: "*The King's Hall is a cavernous barn which doubles as a swimming pool, of all things. The water is covered by boards.*" This Clash concert particularly, in this most unpromising of environments, was part of what I have now come to understand and believe of as a paradigm shift: 1977 is now commonly described as 'Year Zero'. Over the next 4 years I saw many of the Punk and New Wave bands perform, including The Adverts and Penetration. In September 1978, I left Burton-upon-Trent for Stoke-on-Trent. Life at North Staffordshire Polytechnic was very different. I went there excited about art but left disillusioned. Moments of genuine interaction with the



tutors were rare, with the exception of visual studies sessions, which although mainly passive experiences involved being introduced to European film, particularly from the Czech New Wave, including *Valeries Week of Wonders*, directed by Jaromil Jires and *The Firemens Ball*, directed by Milos Forman.

I went to study graphic design, but spent most of the time within the fine art department, listening to Punk in the sculpture hanger with like-minded individuals. I painted and drew comics at home with fellow student Chris Reynolds, because the alternative was to go into class and design labels for Christmas Ale. My own, (admittedly raw) ideas, based on Pop Art and Punk record sleeves, were dismissed by tutors. I carried on painting, drawing comics and designing despite, not because of, my art education. My lecturers had had very little understanding of the new graphic language that Punk had developed through the picture sleeves wrapped around seven-inch singles: they were suspicious of it, and consequently I didn't have the courage to explore as much as I would have wished to.

I left Polytechnic in 1982 with an Honours Degree in Graphic Design, having completed a final-year thesis on British subcultures, moved to London and continued to play in bands. This included the post punk band Happy Refugees, who released an album in 1983 on their own label which was immediately forgotten about by both the critics and the band themselves until 2011, when it was rediscovered and name checked by a number of contemporary American bands. In 1985 I met Pauline Murray and Robert Blamire from the Punk group Penetration, passed an audition and moved to Newcastle upon Tyne, and have played on and off with them for the last 30 odd years.

### Punk Attitude

In order to successfully develop a Punk template that could be compared with Stuckism, I also had to establish what is meant when talking of a 'Punk attitude'. This was not easy. I felt, however, that the area of 'provincialism' within the Punk experience was underexplored. Punk has been approached from a wide variety of angles, with an array of conclusions being put forward for discussion. However this is not the only problem inherent in this subject matter. An attempt to show a democratic, overall view also results in a confusing complexity, as the Don Letts film *Punk Attitude* (2005) demonstrated. Although to be commended for its ambition, Letts' attempt to tell the full story highlighted the difficulty of the task. Letts also had an experience that the vast majority of Punks did not have – a metropolitan one. However, the basic conclusions he came to would be shared by most commentators, including myself,

and consequently has much to offer when discussing Punk. This is because the provincial and metropolitan experience will have some areas of commonality. But they were different enough, I believed, to treat as separate events.

One of the most common philosophies often related to Punk is that of *do-it-yourself* (DIY) – that is, getting out there and doing it, regardless of experience or technical ability. I myself formed a Punk band within weeks of first hearing the Sex Pistols, working with a drummer who had never drummed and a bass player who had

*“One year ago there was F.A. today there is something there is the Jam?. doing a gig on the fuckin’ pavement, kids of fifteen-sixteen forming bands and making people get off their arses for once .... This whole movement is about change – next week there might be ten more bands, ten more mag’s, ten more small private record labels, ten more people chucking in their non-existent jobs and for once doing something for themselves.”*

Tony Moon, *Sideburns*, December 1976

never played bass. Importantly though, they had the right attitude. This DIY philosophy was not recorded in retrospect, but was explicit at the time. The well-known graphic *‘this is a chord, this is another, this is a third, now form a band’* had appeared as early as January 1977 in the fanzine *Sideburns* (not *Sniffin’ Glue* as is often stated). I would still cite this call to arms in *Sideburns* as an important demonstration of Punk attitude: the editorial on page 3 expands on the idea of DIY: *“One year ago there was F.A. today there is something there is the Jam?. doing a gig on the fuckin’ pavement, kids of fifteen-sixteen forming bands and making people get off their arses for once .... This whole movement is about change – next week there might be ten more bands, ten more mag’s, ten more small private record labels, ten more people chucking in their non-existent jobs and for once doing something for themselves.”*

For many Punks, the movement gave them an opportunity to speak for the first time, unrestricted by a lack of technical ability. As we see from the quote above, it was even celebrated. No one was speaking on their behalf, so they did it themselves, creatively. Dick Hebdige, whose 1979 book *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* is seen as a seminal critical text on Punk, is fairly dismissive of the actual creative element of the movement, the outpouring through the music, describing it as *“the frantic Sturm und Drang of new wave music”* and *“a barrage of guitars with the volume*

*and treble turned to maximum accompanied by the occasional saxophone would pursue relentless (un)melodic lines against a turbulent background of cacophonous drumming and screamed vocals.”* Superficially speaking, this is a reasonable observation, but a simplistic one. There is an implicit lack of appreciation of Punk music evident throughout the book. It is also making the mistake of concentrating on a subjective critique of the sound as opposed to what is being said, the attitude behind it, the integrity shown, and how well it communicated to an audience. It is also worth noting that the *do-it-yourself*

negating Hebdige's idea of Punks being illiterate and *“largely innocent.”*

Most work on subculture concentrates on the youth aspect, of rebelling against your elders, which is essentially for many, merely a part of growing up. I am interested in what happens when this anti-establishment stance matures, when it is not simply a matter of 'style', or of saying 'fuck off' to everything. Stuckism, as I understand it at this point, is for me a continuation of an original Punk stance, but with a more focussed, mature and informed approach. I am also a Stuckist.

### The Sound of the Suburbs

Jon Savage, a former *Sounds* journalist, discussed the beginnings of Punk in his book *England's Dreaming*, a key text covering the history of Punk rock: *“The inevitable condemnations of Punk reflected its contradictory desires and stupidities, but they were couched in terms so biased and based on an implicit definition of social acceptability that was so restrictive, that it was easy to reject them. If you did so, the whole thing collapsed like a pack of cards. If you were a Punk, you suddenly found yourself a scapegoat, an outsider. This realization – part delicious, part terrifying – radicalized a small but significant part of a generation.”*

This is accurate, and although important, Savage's book tells the story of Punk rock as though it is a story of London and its suburbs. This is just one story. By contrast, Paul Copley noted in *Punk Rock: So What?* that *“... no matter what Savage or other ‘insiders’ may suggest, Punk rock first surfaced in the nation's consciousness with the aftermath of the Grundy interview in December 1976.”*

The provincial experience often dictated, at that time, that there was a slower distillation of information when new ideas were being formed. Many London based commentators stated that Punk as an idea was all over by the end of 1976. For me it began at that time. Copley says that *“... if provincial Punk rock is less spectacular than it's London counterpart, this is no reason to write it out of history.”* I would argue that although it could be considered less spectacular, not only should it not be written out of history, but it should be celebrated in its own right, and be considered at least as valid as the more well known, metropolitan story.

Paul Copley and Russ Bestley are commentators with whom I identified during my research for my PhD: they are discussing the experiences of perhaps 95% of those who called themselves Punks in 1977. Interestingly, as far as I can judge, perhaps only 5% of writings on Punk discuss this provincial idea, and even then it revolves very much around class or style, and not geography.

The Stuckist founder Billy Childish talks about his provincial experience during this time in his poem *Werk Victim 77...*

*none in the dockyard  
new that i was escaping  
and was never coming back  
i haddnt even told my mother  
i drank the tea she poured me  
and dreamed  
of the summer  
when i would  
paint pictures  
to move the world  
travel to london  
whatch  
Punk bands  
and let the world  
wash me clean*

(Childish, 2008)

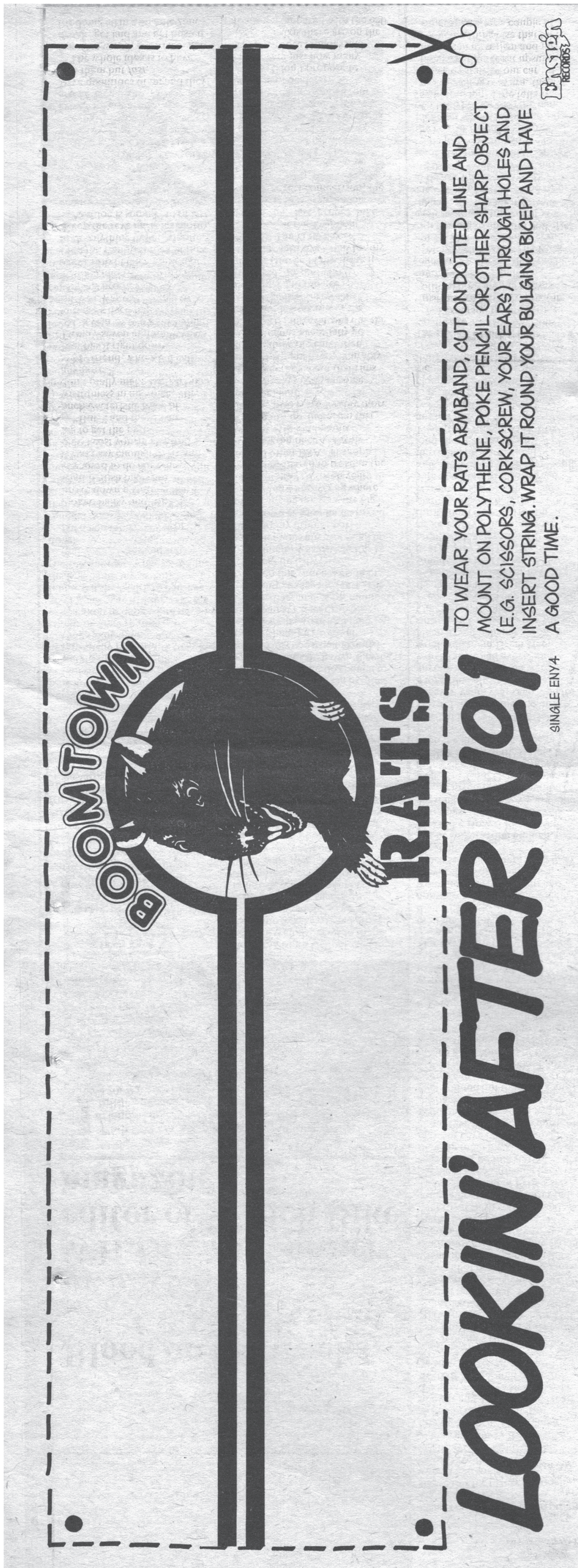
*“As in London, a lot of the early ‘Punks’ were ex-Roxy Music trendy fashion victims who were that little bit older and had been to London and could afford the clothes. I doubt if many of them ever listened to Punk music, and a lot of ‘em had soon moved on to whatever trend was next off the blocks. Meanwhile the rest of us couldn’t have afforded a single Sex/Seditionaries T-shirt between all of us so it was DIY all the way. Sure, we all got it ever so slightly wrong, but in the process created something kinda unique and very special.”*

Brian Young, *Slaughter & the Dogs*

It was clear that this provincial experience was becoming a key area for me, essentially the difference between the London experience and the provincial one. This experience related not just to myself, but also to a number of Stuckist artists. Paul Copley states: *“What is important to remember about a provincial town such as Wigan in the 1970’s is not just its physical distance from metropolitan centres but it’s mental distance from them... It was in this milieu which I have telegraphically outlined – and probably many more like it – that Punk rock struggled to breathe. Furthermore, it is probably precisely because of this struggle that the fate of Punk rock in the provinces is so much more historic and emblematic than the comparatively glitzy phenomenon venerated in published accounts of London Punk.”*

As a provincial Punk, I really believed in what I perceived to be the ideals of the movement, but it was a different belief system to that being lived in London. My personal interpretation was formulated from a number of sources, admittedly to a certain

extent from Malcolm McLaren and the Sex Pistols, as they were the most visible, but without the contextualisation. McLaren was the manager of the Sex Pistols, and was instrumental in producing, along with his partner at the time, Vivienne Westwood, a visual look for Punk. Influenced by the Situationist movement, which promoted provocative actions in an attempt to force social change, based on Marxist and Surrealist ideas, McLaren, along with Jamie Reid (later designer of Sex Pistols record sleeves and general marketing) took part in a student occupation at the Croydon Art school, coinciding with the student riots in Paris. Some of what McLaren had learnt from Situationism was recycled when





the high street and buying from charity shops. As Copley states: *“The kind of Punk subculture that existed in the provinces, by contrast, did not have to work as hard to provide onlookers. As a result it tended to embody ‘bricolage’ and ‘DIY’ culture out of necessity and often for more private reasons rather than for the purposes of post-Westwood ‘confrontation dressing’.*”

‘Confrontation dressing’ in this instance is a term derived from Hebdige. Reading Hebdige today, you get no sense of the provincial experience of going out to see Punk bands when they managed to get to your area. Once again Paul Copley has the view from outside London firmly in his grasp: he quotes Bill Osgerby: *“This distance between provincial Punks and their metropolitan predecessors is stated nicely by Osgerby when he emphasizes the art school/middle class London-commuter belt background of those who frequented Punk clubs like The Roxy and The Vortex. ‘Indeed’ he adds, ‘the “outsider” posture of Britain’s initial Punk “moment” is best seen as a piece of radical theatre, a calculated attempt to enflame and outrage establishment sensibilities’ (Osgerby 1998a) ... One Wigan Punk rocker reports the way that ‘the entire top deck of a passing bus gave me “the finger” as I set out to see Slaughter and the dogs at Wigan Casino ... Clearly, it was one thing to be a spectacular Punk rocker in the safety of a club in central London, and quite another to attempt to be one in a small provincial enclave.”*

I recognize myself and many other non-London Punks in these descriptions. For example, Brian Young was a member of the Manchester Punk group Slaughter & the Dogs and he contrasted his provincial experience with that of someone growing up in London at that time, when interviewed by Jon Robb for his book *Punk Rock: An Oral History* in 2006: *“As in London, a lot of the early ‘Punks’ were ex-Roxy Music trendy fashion victims who were that little bit older and had been to London and could afford the clothes. I doubt if many of them ever listened to Punk music, and a lot of ‘em had soon moved on to whatever trend was next off the blocks. Meanwhile the rest of us couldn’t have afforded a single Sex/Seditionaries T-shirt between all of us so it was DIY all the way. Sure, we all got it ever so slightly wrong, but in the process created something kinda unique and very special.”*

Many provincial Punks got it wrong, including myself. I had long come to terms with this misreading by the time I got involved in Stuckism, but initial research began to show that this was an experience shared by others, including Billy Childish: *“... all that stuff that McLaren said is rubbish – he said it, we believed it, so it happened, but it happened because we had the misinformation and so it belongs to us not him.”*

This was another key point for me, because this original misinterpretation of what was happening in the London scene, a misinterpretation that took place essentially



*“...it is probably precisely because of this struggle that the fate of Punk rock in the provinces is so much more historic and emblematic than the comparatively glitzy phenomenon venerated in published accounts of London Punk.”*

Paul Copley: *Leave the Capitol*, 1996

in the provinces, I thought, had led in later years to a belief system that could be seen in a number of different areas, including some of the Stuckist painters, and particularly within the Stuckist manifestos. Some of us had developed and taken ownership of a set of values different to that being practiced in London. This was important to acknowledge, as it simplified the research when dealing with Punk as a philosophy.

What was important about Punk was having the experience of Punk, or more pertinently, having an experience of Punk. It must be acknowledged that a subculture is essentially provincial in nature: we can go back as far as Hebdige’s work for confirmation of that, but much of the writing in this area is without the experience of actually being part of one. There is often a

distance, a coldness within the writing, that does not fulfil. There also exists the dilemma of just how ‘authentic’ these provincial Punks were, compared to the ‘innovators’ involved in the London scene.

Billy Childish showed his belief that because of his misunderstanding of Punk, through this weakness, lay his strength: *“My problem is that I believed in what they said, or my saving grace was that I believed in what they said. I thought “ok you have to have a funny name” – I was Gus Claudius, and my mate said “no you’re not you’re Billy Childish, and you do things that are naughty... a proper British cheeky chap.” We weren’t political at all – I didn’t know what the anarchy sign meant.”*

We could conclude that this story is only my story, and of no use or interest to anyone else. The media theorist Andy Medhurst

discusses his dread of the student who professes to know what it was like during a particular period in history because they took part in it, in other words the ‘I was there’ argument. Medhurst believes that this claim is a pre-emptive strike *“... that seeks to dismiss all the claims of retrospective thinking, all the writers and theorists who have subsequently put forward interpretations of cultural events, in favour of the apparently unchallengeable testimony of first hand experience.”* Russ Bestley gave his feelings on this issue in terms of his own research: *“Part of my ‘I was there’ argument, if you like, that did come out... I think there’s a subcultural internal language, there’s a dialogue in the graphics, in the sleeves, there’s a dialogue in the lyrics, there’s something going on there, the bands are referencing other bands and talking about each other, that you can only know from being deeply involved with the subculture. I think it’s very hard to understand that language as an external person who’s coming to it. That’s one thing that I did argue.”*

Medhurst goes on to discuss how teachers of popular culture (such as himself) are inevitably going to be *“... confronted with the contradictory feelings generated by turning one’s own past or present leisure activities into matters of intellectual debate, and indeed, those contradictions should, ideally, form part of the subject matter of what and how we study, offering a chance for productive self reflection.”* However, he admits that *“... this process often involves encountering readings of texts that deconstruct and even undermine the meanings they have for you, and in every case but one this causes me no grief. That exception, above all the other cultural forms and practices which have attracted me over the years, is Punk...”*. My findings led me to believe that Punk is a special case, not just because I experienced it like Medhurst, but because it differed significantly to other subcultures before it: not only because it encouraged participation as a practitioner, not just as a follower, but also because of its long lasting and wide ranging influence, including the growth of ideas such as Stuckism. This is why Punk is so hard to pin down, and why it has been called the last subculture: it is not about a style, or a fashion, or a discipline, but an attitude – it is about doing things in the right way for the right reasons.

PAUL HARVEY



# A STUCKIST DOCUMENT

## The first Remodernist art group (est. 1999)

## STUCKISM AND PUNK

*Helping to get art back on its feet*

1. You are fully entitled to do something.
2. Punk is right thought and right action.
3. Authenticity is honesty. It’s important to be honest, and it helps the critics to find something to criticize.
4. 21st century punk in art is painting pictures and making sense.
5. Stuckist style is in its content. The more effort the style, the less the substance.
6. Fashion is bollocks.
7. Punk means brilliance is possible by everyone, but not just anyone.
8. Jack Vettriano is better than Jeff Koons. Joseph Beuys, Bruce Nauman and Takashi Murakami are crap.
9. Punk lost its way as a London fashion in 1976, but revived in 1977, when young boys and girls walked around small town shopping precincts wearing safety pins and razor blade necklaces. Some of them stopped doing this, when they discovered punk.
10. 1873 was a good year for punk.
11. Damien Hirst was a punk at heart, and became a stuckist.
12. Vivienne Westwood’s Active Resistance manifesto is a pompous rehash of The Stuckists manifesto eight years too late. But thanks anyway.
13. When bad artists grow up, they can become great artists.
14. Genesis is punk. The Book of Genesis, not the group for fucks sake.
15. It’s worth making something that lasts longer than a week.
16. Jonathan Jones is an enemy of art.
17. Conceptual art is a dead end.
18. Stuckists aren’t stuck.
19. Art comes from the soul, which is unfortunate, as most contemporary artists don’t have one.
20. If Leonardo da Vinci was alive today, he would paint like Bill Lewis.

Paul Harvey and Charles Thomson with the Stuckist Bureau of Information

1 June 2010

The following have been accepted by the Stuckist Bureau of Inquiry for possible inclusion as Honorary Punk Stuckists: Salvador Rosa Thomas Gainsborough Dante Gabriel Rossetti Vincent van Gogh Ernst Ludwig Kirchner Sir Peter Blake



Hitsville UK – A Timeline and Geography of UK Punk Singles 1976-84

1976

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

22nd February 1978  
Rough Trade Records  
opens at 202 Kensington  
Park Road, London

16th March 1976  
Labour Prime Minister  
Harold Wilson resigns, to  
be succeeded by James  
Callaghan. By April, the  
Government had lost its  
formal majority, with the  
loss of a by-election and  
the defection of three  
back-bench MPs

4th June 1976  
The Sex Pistols play live at  
the Lesser Free Trade Hall  
Manchester, a gig organised  
by Pete Shelley and Howard  
Devoto of the Buzzcocks

29th August 1976  
The Sex Pistols, The Clash  
and The Buzzcocks play a  
showcase gig at the Screen  
On The Green cinema,  
Islington, London

30th August 1976  
Rioting breaks out  
at the Notting Hill  
Carnival, London

20-21st September 1976  
100 Club Punk Festival  
Oxford Street, London

8th October 1976  
Sex Pistols sign contract  
with EMI records

22nd October 1976  
The Damned release  
the first official UK Punk  
single, *New Rose*, on  
Stiff records

1st December 1976  
Sex Pistols live TV  
Bill Grundy interview

21st December 1976  
Grand opening of  
The Roxy club in  
Neal Street, Covent  
Garden, London

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

1977

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

February 1977  
Sid Vicious joins  
the Sex Pistols

10th March 1977  
Sex Pistols sign contract  
with A&M records

18th March 1977  
Sex Pistols fired by A&M  
records

23rd March 1977  
Prime Minister James  
Callaghan and Liberal leader  
David Steel establish new  
Lib-Lab Pact Government

13th May 1977  
Sex Pistols sign contract  
with Virgin records

7th June 1977  
The Queen's Silver  
Jubilee celebrations

16th August 1977  
Elio Virelli dies at  
the age of 42

16th September 1977  
Rock star Marc Bolan  
killed in car crash

20th December 1977  
Stiff Records terminate  
their contract with  
The Damned, leaving  
the group in disarray

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

1978

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

March 1978  
The Roxy club in Covent  
Garden finally closes its doors,  
after struggling on since April  
1977 when original manager  
Andy Cossowski left it in  
financial difficulties

14th January 1978  
John Lydon quits Sex  
Pistols during US tour

30th April 1978  
1st National Rock Against  
Racism Carnival, Victoria  
Park, London

15th July 1978  
Northern Rock Against  
Racism Carnival, Moss  
Side, Manchester

24th September 1978  
2nd National Rock Against  
Racism Carnival, Brockwell  
Park, London

12th October 1978  
Sid Vicious arrested for  
the murder of his girlfriend,  
Nancy Spungen in New York

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December



Hitsville UK – A Timeline and Geography of UK Punk Singles 1976-84

1979

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

January 1979

2nd February 1979

28th March 1979

23rd April 1979

27th December 1979

Water workers, ambulance drivers, sewerage staff and dustmen all involved in industrial action, heralding the 'Winter of Discontent'

Death of Sid Vicious, Sex Pistols' bass player

Vote of no confidence in the Labour Government is passed by 311 to 310 votes in parliament, forcing a general election

Anti-Nazi demonstrator Blair Peach killed by police march in Southall, London

April – May 1979  
20 date national PAR Dance and Defend tour

4th May 1979  
Margaret Thatcher elected Prime Minister

Soviet troops invade Afghanistan in response to a military coup and the overthrow of the pro-Soviet Communist government, leading to a prolonged war with Afghan mujahidin guerrillas supported by the USA, China and Saudi Arabia

1980

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

April 1980

May 1980

14th July 1980

15th October 1980

27th October 1980

4th November 1980

10th December 1980

Riots erupt in St. Paul's, Bristol

Protect and Survive leaflet issued in UK

Death of Ian Curtis, lead singer of Joy Division

James Callaghan resigns Labour party leadership, to be replaced by Michael Foot

Of The Album, the debut compilation album of the Oi sub-genre, released by EMI records in conjunction with Sounds magazine

Ronald Reagan elected US President

John Lennon shot dead in New York

1981

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

January 1981

10th – 12th April 1981

11th May 1981

3rd July 1981

29th July 1981

September 1981

The NME issues C81, a cassette compilation of post punk music. Crass Records release Bullshit Detector, a compilation of demos by unsigned Anarcho Punk groups

Riots erupt in Brixton, South London



















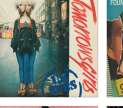



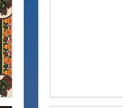
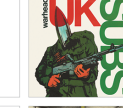




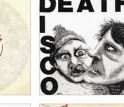




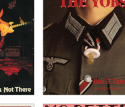
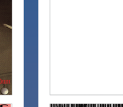







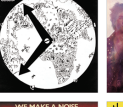



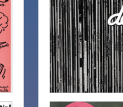
















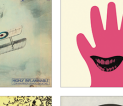
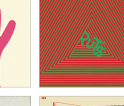


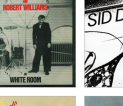


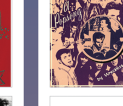


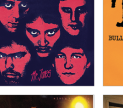





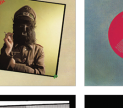








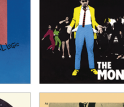





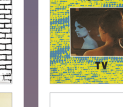



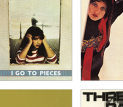




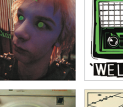
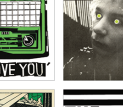




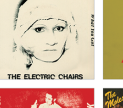







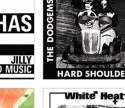

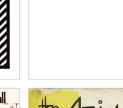

































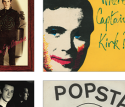
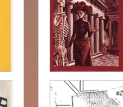















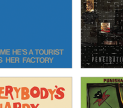

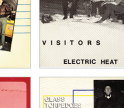





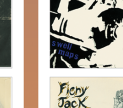
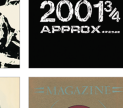


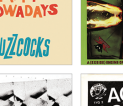








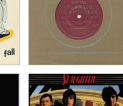

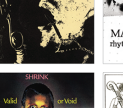

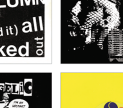













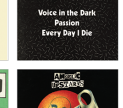




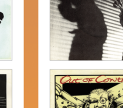

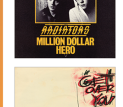













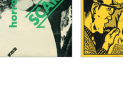
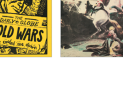








Bob Marley, reggae musician, dies

Ogi in Southall by Oi bands the 4 Skins, The Business and Last Resort results in a riot

Further rioting occurs in Toxteth and Bradford

Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer marry at St Paul's Cathedral

Women for Life on Earth set up a peace camp at RAF Greenham Common Airbase to protest the deployment of Cruise nuclear missiles at the site



Hitsville UK – A Timeline and Geography of UK Punk Singles 1976-84

1982

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

2nd April 1982  
Argentina invades the Falkland Islands

20th June 1982  
Argentinian surrender, end of Falklands War

November 1982  
Craze How Does It Feel single discussed in Parliament during Prime Minister's Question Time

1983

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

9th June 1983  
Margaret Thatcher re-elected Prime Minister

1984

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

14th November 1983  
Celebrated record sleeve designer Barney Bubbles commits suicide

25th October 1983  
USA invades Grenada

5th March 1984  
Miners at Cortonwood colliery in Yorkshire strike over pit closure, followed a week later by a national miners' strike

29th May 1984  
Miners and police clash at Orgreave, near Sheffield

12th October 1984  
IRA bomb attack on the British Government, at the Conservative party conference in Brighton



# LIVE PAGE

## marquee

90 Wardour St., W.1    01-437 6603

OPEN EVERY NIGHT FROM 7.00 pm to 11.00 pm  
REDUCED ADMISSION FOR STUDENTS AND MEMBERS

Thurs. 1st Sept. (Adm 85p) <b>GLORIA MUNDI</b> Plus support and Ian Fleming	Mon. 5th Sept. (Adm 75p) <b>RADIO STARS</b> Plus support and Jerry Floyd
Fri. 2nd Sept. (Adm 85p) <b>ADVERTS</b> Buster James Band and Ian Fleming	Tues. 6th Sept. (Adm £1) <b>GENERATION X</b> Jolt and Jerry Floyd
Sat. 3rd Sept. (Adm 75p) <b>THE STUKAS</b> Mean Street and Ian Fleming	Wed. 7th and Thurs. 8th Sept. MARQUEE SPECIAL <b>JOHN MARTYN</b> plus friends and Jerry Floyd Admission — £1.50
Sun. 4th Sept. (Adm 85p) <b>ROOGALATOR</b> Plus support and Nick Legh	

Hamburgers and other Hot and cold snacks are available

TELEPHONE 01-387-0428/9

## MUSIC MACHINE

CAMDEN HIGH ST. OFF. MORNINGTON CRESCENT TUBE INH.1

Wednesday, Aug. 31st £1.00 <b>LITTLE ACRE</b> + A.1 Free admission for one with this advert before 10.30 p.m.	Saturday, Sept. 3rd £2.00 <b>WOODY WOODMANSEY'S U-BOAT</b> + The Speedometers Monday, Sept. 5th £1.00 <b>EASY STREET</b> + Support Free admission for one with this advert before 10.30 p.m.
Thursday, Sept. 1st £1.50 <b>DOCTORS OF MADNESS</b> + The Jolt Friday, Sept. 2nd £1.50 <b>JIGSAW</b> + Tequilla	Tuesday, Sept. 6th £1.00 <b>FLYING ACES</b> + Support Free admission for one with this advert before 10.30 p.m.

LICENSED BARS - LIVE MUSIC - DANCING  
3PM - 2 AM MONDAY TO SATURDAY

STRAIGHT MUSIC PRESENTS

## MINK DeVILLE

WITH GUESTS  
**TYLA GANG**  
ANDY DUNNLEY AT THE EVIN JUNK BODY  
**RAINBOW THEATRE**  
232 SILVER SISTERS ROAD, N.7  
**SUN. 25th SEPTEMBER at 8.00**  
TICKETS £2.50 £2.00 £1.50 (INC VAT) ADVANCE THEATRE BOX OFFICE 263 BELL S. LONDON THEATRE BOARDS, SMITHFIELD WAY, E.C.1 3JY, PINEWILLOW OFFICE, 240-250, SOCIAL AGENTS DRUM NIGHT

BARBEQUE GRILL  
NOW OPEN  
UPSTAIRS  
HOT & ANCIENT  
UPPER STREET  
ISLINGTON, N.1

Thurs. Sept 1st 50p <b>NO DICE</b>	Sun Sept 4th 50p <b>DIRE STRAIGHTS</b>
Friday Sept 2nd 75p <b>THE AMAZORBLADES</b>	Monday Sept 5th £1.00 <b>THE PIRATES</b>
Saturday Sept 3rd 75p <b>THE TYLA GANG</b>	Tuesday Sept 6th 50p <b>PHILIP RAMBOW</b>
Wednesday September 7th 75p <b>THE STUKERS + THE JOLT</b>	

MAXWELL (VALE) HALL  
AYLESBURY

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3rd, at 7.30 pm  
SWAMPY BEAT

## RACING CARS

RUMBLE STRIPS  
AC SOUNDS AND VISION

Tickets: 155p from Earth Records, Aylesbury, Sun Music, High Wycombe, Ellis Jon's, Amersham, Free'n'Easy, Hemel Hempstead, F. L. Moore, Betchley, Dunstable and Luton, H.V. V., Buntingham, or 155p at door on night. Life membership 25p.  
Take me from the city

## THE SWAN

HAMMERSMITH BDY. W6  
Tel 01-748-1043  
Opp Hammersmith Underground District Metropolitan and Piccadilly Lines  
Admission Free

Thursday September 1st <b>LANDSCAPE</b>	Sunday September 4th <b>KATZEN JAMMER</b>
Saturday September 3rd <b>PLEASERS</b>	Wednesday September 7th <b>BUSTER JAMES</b>

## VORTEX

AT CRACKERS 203 WARDOUR ST. LONDON W1  
Every Mon & Tues 8.30pm till 2am

**SHOXSIE & THE BANSHEES**  
THE OUTSIDERS THE SUSPECTS  
THE VERDICTS  
plus D.J. Gary Marks

## ELECTRIC CHAIRS

Featuring Wayne County  
THE KILLJOYS LOCAL OPERATOR  
THE IGNORANTS<sup>108</sup>  
plus D.J. Nick Lee

SUNDAY 4th SEPTEMBER  
4 pm to 11 pm  
**SWISS COTTAGE**  
(Nr. Tube Stn).  
**WINCHESTER**  
OPEN AIR  
FESTIVAL  
Phone 01-586 2441  
**CHANGES WARP III**  
**FISH CO**  
Admission Free

**THE 100 CLUB**  
100 Oxford St., W.1.  
Thursday September 8th  
The Fabulous Top Ranking Rockers  
**MATUMBI**  
Plus Superior Roots Rock  
Specialist Sounds  
Doors open 7.30pm.  
Late Bars Food  
Band on stage approx. 10pm  
Admission on door on night  
£1.75 incl. VAT

**FREEMASONS TAVERN SE.25**  
81 PENGE ROAD, SE25 778 6831  
Fri. Sept. 2nd (Free) Sat. Sept. 3rd (Free)

**TED DEAD BAND** **TENNIS SHOES**

**NOW! SEE IT FROM THE BEGINNING!**  
**JACK WRANGLER vs ROGER** SENSATIONAL TOGETHER  
**vs CHRISTY TWINS vs Brian B**  
THE WORLD'S **FIRST** GAY FEATURE MOTION  
PICTURE IN INCREDIBLE, AWESOME  
**3 DIMENSION** WITH SPECIAL GLASSES  
**HEAVY EQUIPMENT**  
Best All Male Feature Yet!  
PLUS! 1st RUN FEATURETTE  
"GORDON GRANT SUPERSTAR"  
Cont. fr. 10 AM Adults Only

THE RED COW  
HAMMERSMITH ROAD, W. 6

Friday September 2nd 80p  
**THE DRONES**  
Saturday September 3rd Free  
**NO DICE**  
Sunday September 4th Free  
**FRUIT EATING BEARS**  
Wednesday September 7th 60p  
**THE LURKERS**

Thursday September 1st 50p  
**XTC**

**FULLERS TRADITIONAL ALES**

**THE NASHVILLE ROOM**

Thursday September 1st 75p  
**THE ONLY ONES + THE LOOK**  
Friday September 2nd & Saturday September 3rd £1  
**ROOGALATOR + THE YACHTS**  
Sunday September 4th  
**ELVIS COSTELLO**  
(Tickets from 200p Records, 37 Alexander St., W2 2 pm person £1 each  
Monday September 5th and Tuesday September 6th £1  
**DOCTORS OF MADNESS + THE JOLT**

CORNER CROMWELL ROAD/NORTH END ROAD, W14  
(Adjacent West Kensington Tube Tel. 01 603 6071)

## The JAM

are **RECORDING LIVE** their next two London shows at the Nashville Rooms on September 10th support Jolt and 100 Club on September 11th support New Hearts

Admission is by ticket **ONLY**.

Tickets available Nashville Rooms 12 noon 3/9/77 & 100 Club 2pm 4/9/77.

**SPEAK-EASY**  
01-580 7930

Wednesday, August 31st  
**LANDSCAPE**  
Thursday, September 1st  
**OTWAY/BARRETT FIASCO**  
Friday, September 2nd  
**NEO**  
Saturday, September 3rd  
**STATE LINE**  
Monday, September 5th  
**TO BE ANNOUNCED**  
Tuesday, September 6th  
**LIGHTNING RAIDERS**  
Wednesday, September 7th  
**TO BE ANNOUNCED**  
**Speakeasy**  
50 Margaret St., Oxford Circus, W1  
Reservations 01-580 8810

**WOODS**  
PLYMOUTH  
Tel 296118 - late bar

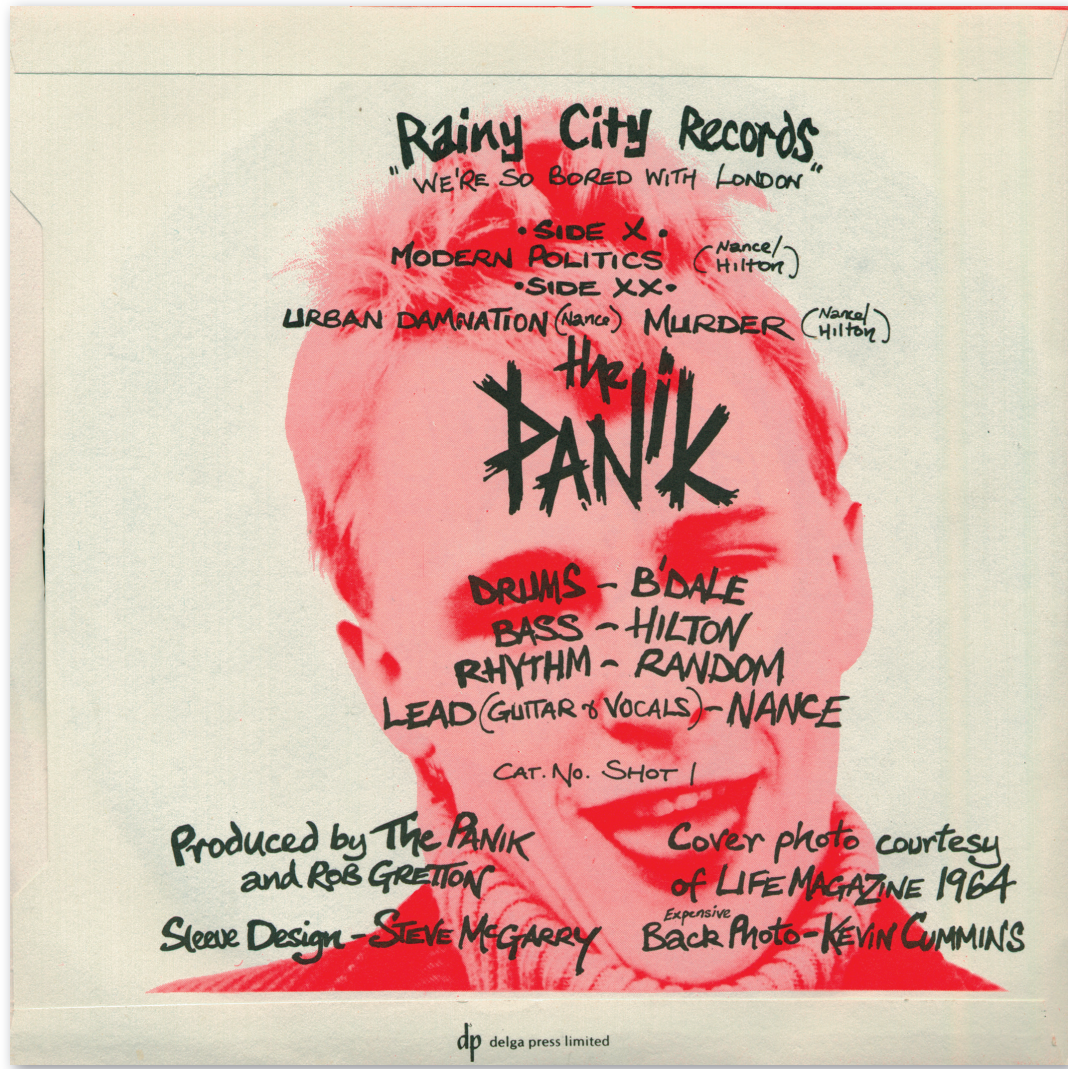
Next Tues 6th Sept. 75p

**ADVERTS**  
+ Spitfire Boys  
Next Fri. 9th

## TABLE

**DUKE OF LANCASTER**  
Beaune British Rail  
NEW BARNEY  
01-449 0485

Thursday, September 2nd  
**TEQUILLA**  
Friday, September 3rd  
**BLUNT INSTRUMENT**  
Saturday, September 4th  
**PRIMARY DRIVE**  
Sunday, September 5th  
**SHADY LADY**  
Tuesday, September 6th  
**SHIFT**



# FROM LONDON'S BURNING TO STEN GUNS IN SUNDERLAND

## RUSS BESTLEY

THE PUNK MOVEMENT BETWEEN 1976-84 represented a distinct period in the development of youth culture in Britain. Whilst certain principles paralleled earlier generations and youth movements, they were married to an outspoken ideology that declared 'anyone can do it' and an overtly nihilistic attitude toward the music industry itself. This led to a situation where 'anyone' did, in fact, 'do it', and the resulting deluge of independent, do-it-yourself records, concerts and networks of activity threatened to seriously disrupt the commercial stability of the popular music business, albeit temporarily. This period also saw a shift in power from traditional centres of production to smaller, independent hubs of operation with often clear local agendas.

UK punk has been portrayed as London-centric, with an occasional 'nod' to a small number of other major metropolitan centres, such as Manchester or Leeds, but little attention has been paid to more local interpretations of punk and post-punk styles, or of the groups and clusters

of individuals from further afield who responded to punk's initial call to arms to 'do it themselves.' There are many examples of punk output reflecting a connection to geographical localities and regional cultural histories, and the sense that often small-scale local agendas and identities operated alongside and in parallel to higher-profile national and international developments is key to understanding punk's wider subtext. This sense of local identity was played out in record sleeves, lyrics, song titles, band names and in the graphic identities of groups and labels across the UK – and beyond.

**Out Of Town**

A study of the relationship between space, place and identity in popular music has a number of clear historical precedents. Jazz and blues histories tend to centre specific styles on regions such as New Orleans, the Mississippi Delta and Chicago, while country music has a spiritual home in Nashville, Tennessee and the Virginia mountains. However, while these musical

genres have been subject to extensive analysis and investigation, and an ongoing critical narrative forms the basis of formal academic and historical enquiries, more recent developments within popular music, such as punk, have yet to receive the same level of attention.

A review of the range of punk and punk-related records released in the UK between 1976 and 1984 reveals that punk's 'centre of gravity' shifted from London in the period 1976-77 to the wider regions of the UK in 1981-82. The bulk of first wave punk records were produced by groups based in and around London, though Manchester was important between 1978 and 1980 (largely through the output of a relatively small number of groups including Buzzcocks, Magazine and Slaughter & The Dogs), and other cities such as Liverpool and Birmingham were also quite active between 1977 and 1979. By contrast, many subsequent releases originated in the provincial regions of England, in particular from smaller towns and cities in the North,

West Midlands and the South West. There was also a strong connection with Scotland and Northern Ireland via successful groups such as the Skids, Rezillos, Stiff Little Fingers, Undertones, Rudi, Outcasts and subsequent hardcore punk scene-leaders The Exploited.

Punk's migration did not follow the more traditional pattern from rural areas towards the major commercial centres (as had happened in the development of country music, jazz and blues in the USA, for instance), but rather acted inversely, as a largely inner-city urban style which shifted over time away from the city centres and out to the regions. Equally, punk did not encompass a general shift toward either commercial acceptance (as with Country and Rock & Roll) or a growing status as a form of high art (as with Jazz) – although certain developments such as 'New Wave' were to evolve from the genre as a more acceptable commercial interpretation of punk style. A significant strand of punk engaged in a constant battle with the music



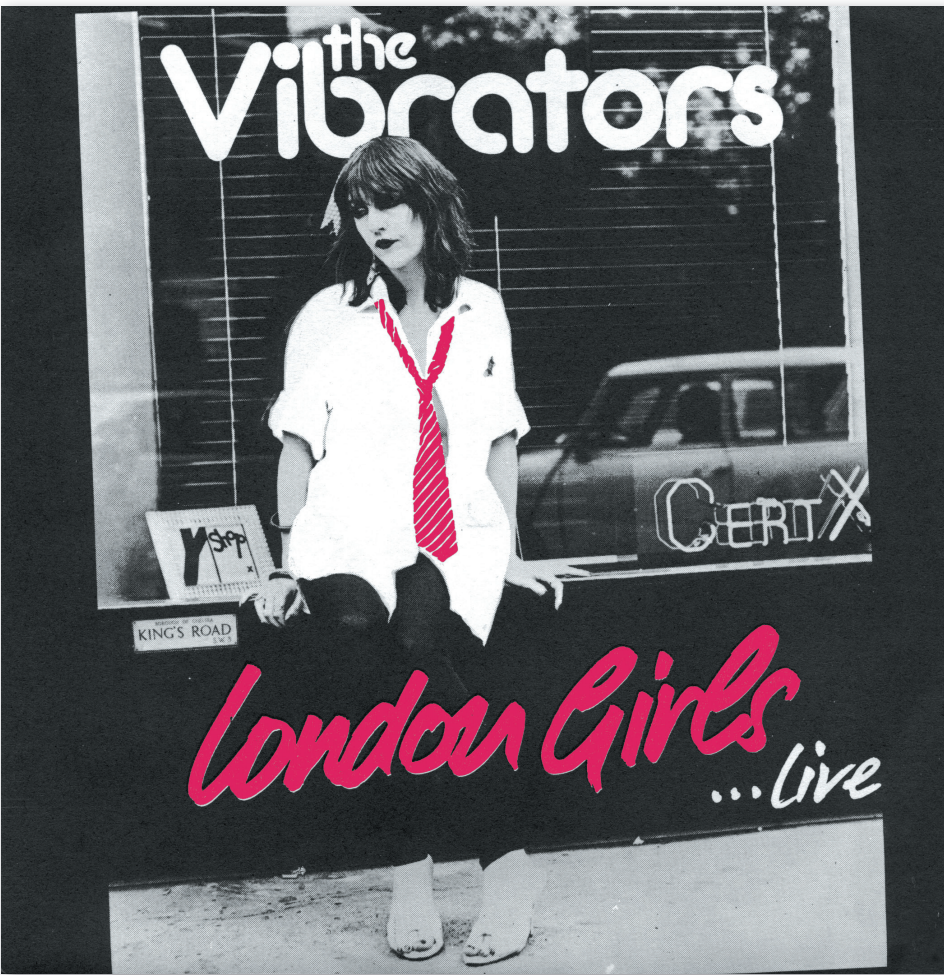
industry to remain underground, avant-garde and resolutely uncommercial. As the music industry invested in New Wave, a number of increasingly aggressive, abrasive and deliberately awkward sub-genres (such as Hardcore, Oi! and Anarcho-Punk, as well as the more radical elements of DIY and Post-Punk) sought to distance themselves from what they saw as the commercialisation of the movement. These developments can be seen to have been both political and aesthetic – from the lyrics and public statements of the groups involved to the musical and visual styles of their records.

The oral traditions of folk music, together with regional forms of music and speech or dialect, are explored in a comprehensive overview of the geography of popular music by John Connell and Chris Gibson, *Sound Tracks: Popular Music, Identity and Place* (Routledge 2003). By mapping the notion of ‘authenticity’ within a geographical and historical model, the authors are able to draw parallels between ancient forms of local musical identity and contemporary, mass-produced commercial rock music; “...where any form of popular music has provided some link with place and community (including the fans), displayed some sense of history, or claimed some heritage (in instruments, local performers or ethnicity) and evoked lived experience there have been claims to authenticity.” Equally, song lyrics may historically refer to place names, but these are often as much for their poetic or rhythmic qualities as for any sense of specific location. While the towns along Route 66 provided a geography of early Rock & Roll, “...the resonance and timbre of the words were at least as important as the character and location of the places; onomatopoeia thus contributed to new musical geographies, and states such as Georgia benefited from their disproportionate presence in the lyrics of popular music.” Connell and Gibson go on to suggest that references to other small towns and rural areas in popular songs are often made for comic purposes, rather than for any sense of ‘realism’.

Arguably, punk’s adoption of the local vernacular reverses this pattern: one classic example which displays a wry sense of humour whilst documenting the real lives of local people is the Ramones’ November 1977 single *Rockaway Beach*, which takes the musical and lyrical codes of the (Californian) Beach Boys *Surfin’ USA* and reapplies them to the East Side beaches of New York;

*Chewing out a rhythm on my bubble gum  
The sun is out and I want some  
It’s not hard, not far to reach  
We can hitch a ride to Rockaway Beach*

There followed numerous examples of punk lyrics paying homage – paradoxical, ironic, critical or celebratory – to their locality and that of their fans, which in many cases



The Vibrators *London Girls (live)*/Stiff Little Fingers (Epic) 1977

meant their close friends and immediate circle, rather than any pretence to a wider audience, and the language used and local cultural reference points could then be very particular and specific.

### English Towns

The gradual shift in punk’s emphasis from London to the regions is reflected in the lyrical concerns of many punk records produced across the period, as well as in visual and textual references on record sleeves. Early examples of punk recordings reflecting a developing London scene included The Stranglers *London Lady* (1977), The Maniacs *Chelsea ’77* (1977), Television Personalities *Oxford Street W1 and Posing At The Roundhouse* (1978), Menace *GLC* (1978) and numerous songs by The Clash, including *London’s Burning*, *Clash City Rockers*, *White Man In Hammersmith Palais* and *London Calling* (1977-79). Other examples of a direct association included band names such as London SS, Chelsea and London and later groups such as London Px, London Cowboys, Local Heroes SW9 and the Leyton Buzzards. While The Maniacs were celebrating the area around the King’s Road on their single *Chelsea ’77*, The Vibrators *London Girls* featured a photograph of a young girl in front of a shop window, next to a small plaque declaring “*King’s Road, Borough of Chelsea, SW3*”. This close association between punk and the capital – and west London in particular – was set to continue, and remains something of a cliché.

Later on, examples of ‘provincial’ songwriting became more widespread, with lyrics by newer punk groups describing life

in towns and cities across the UK: examples include Stiff Little Fingers (from Belfast) *Suspect Device*, *Alternative Ulster*, *State Of Emergency*, *Barbed Wire Love* (all reflecting the troubles in Northern Ireland) (1978-79), The Fall (from Manchester) *In My Area* and *Leave The Capitol* (1978) and the Prefects (from Birmingham) *Bristol Road Leads To Dachau* and *Barbarellas* (about racial problems in the local area and a tribute to the local punk venue respectively) (1978). Humour and parody also played a part in songs such as Peter & The Test Tube Babies’ *Peacehaven Wild Kids* (1982), while an internal dialogue within punk itself is reflected in the song *Sten Guns In Sunderland* (1983) by Red London – a direct response to The Clash’s famous 1977 *White Riot* lyrical pronouncement “*Sten guns in Knightsbridge*”.

The Panik (from Manchester) released the *It Won’t Sell* e.p. on the Rainy City label in 1977, with the provocative label note “*We’re so bored with London*” striking a blow for a local identity away from the capital. This anti London sentiment reflected the media attention paid to London during the early development of the punk scene. Another notable example of this genre, a live favourite which was recorded in 1980 though not released at the time, is the track *We’re From Bradford* by The Negatives – its chorus chant of “*We’re from Bradford, not from London. B-R-A-D-F-O-R-D!*” captures the provincial sentiment perfectly. Sheffield Post-Punk group 2.3 took an even more provocative stance with their song (*I Don’t Care About*) *London* that included the lyric “*London’s burning’ they all shout, but I wouldn’t even piss on it to put the fire out*”.

Another region of the United Kingdom embraced an even more dramatic local, and national, identity. Welsh punk group Llygod Ffyrnig (‘Ferocious Mice’), formed in Llanelli in December 1977; their sole vinyl output, a three-track e.p. featuring N.C.B. (the initials of the National Coal Board) backed with *Sais* and *Cariad Y Bus Stop*, was released on their own Pwdwr Records label in 1978, and was recorded in the Welsh language. Another Welsh group, Y Trwynau Coch, released their debut e.p. *Merched Dan IS* on the Recordiau Sgarw label in 1978, again singing in their native language.

Clay Fav, a group formed in the popular tourist destination of Windermere in the Lake District, released one single on their own label in 1979, with the lead track *Air Lakeland* declaring; “... *the street where I live is dead neat, Claife Ave in Windermere*” before going on to complain about tourists flocking to the area each summer. However, in the end they ironically purport to accept this position as a natural state of affairs; “... *it’s all ok it’s all our fault, we chose to live in this beautiful spot*”. Rural themes came further to the fore during the early 1980s. A compilation e.p. on the Bluurg label, *Wessex ’82*, included a photograph of the ancient chalk horse cut into the landscape at Westbury Hill, Wiltshire. This image locates the record in a specific area, and the link to a historical and cultural icon gives the label a strong regional identity.

It is also important to note the links between locality and perceived notions of authenticity and originality. Dick Hebdige’s apparent paradox between ‘original’ punks and ‘hangers-on’ was later questioned by David Muggleton. Through Muggleton’s analysis, the notion of an authentic group of ‘original’ punks is brought into question, and the importance of later developments and interpretations is not overlooked. This notion of authenticity and the ‘innovators’ of the punk movement was also brought into critical view by Gary Clarke: “*Hebdige concerns himself only with the innovative punks, the original ‘authentic’ and ‘genuine’ punks concentrated in the London area.*

*This is characteristic of most of the Centre’s subcultural theory – it explains why certain youths develop a particular style say, in the East End, but youth subcultures elsewhere are usually dismissed as part of the incorporation and containment of the subversive implications of that style. We are never given reasons why youths’ ‘in the sticks’ are inclined to adopt a particular style. Hebdige’s analysis begins with a heat wave in Oxford Street and ends in a Kings Road boutique.*”

Later punk groups often referred directly to their local towns, music scenes and venues, in lyrics and song titles, and occasionally in their sleeve graphics. Many single sleeves included thanks and credits to local friends and fans of the bands, with some groups going so far as to recognise their local scenes in song: one

such example was the track *Livi Punkz*, by The Skroteez on their debut *Overspill* e.p., a tribute to their local crowd in the Scottish new town of Livingston. The spelling of the word Punkz here follows a convention developed across many independent punk releases in the form of group credits: tributes would often be paid to the local “punx” or “crew” who followed the band. Sometimes local references were made in more negative terms – another track on The Skroteez e.p., *New Town*, includes the biting lyric “*They should blow it up, or else burn it all down!*”, and the single sleeve shows an aerial photograph of Livingston itself, an ‘overspill’ estate to the south west of the city of Edinburgh.

This also demonstrates an important point with regard to locality and punk: while many groups recorded songs which were critical of the ‘boredom’ of their immediate surroundings, a sense of celebration of the local punk scene was often also evident in a kind of inverted civic pride. It is also interesting to note that some groups – notably the Boomtown Rats and Radiators From Space (both from Dublin) and Stiff Little Fingers (from Belfast) faced strong criticism from their local punk scenes for ‘deserting’ the area and relocating to London to boost their careers – thus breaking two unspoken punk codes of conduct: turning their backs on their original supporters and pursuing a commercial agenda. Conversely, groups such as the Rezillos (from Edinburgh) and Undertones (from Derry) cite the fact that they remained close to their hometown as having had a negative effect on their long-term musical careers. Initially, this position was indicative of a new, and possibly overly-simplistic, level of ambition in relation to regional punk – as Rezillos founder member and guitarist Jo Callis reflected in 2006; “*I think the naïve dream of the late 70’s/ punk era was that the music industry came to you if you made a big enough noise, and nationally reported scenes were springing up in Manchester, Leeds and all sorts of places, and with the “local” independent label situation being probably the healthiest it’s ever been, decentralisation was the issue of the day, so like fucking idiots we just stayed put in Edinburgh.*”

The Cult Maniax, from Torrington in Devon, gained some local notoriety in 1982 with the release of their *Frenzie* e.p., featuring the track *Black Horse* which documented the group members’ series of disagreements with a local pub landlord. After describing the owner as a ‘nazi’ and informing other punks not to go to the pub through some fairly explicit lyrics, the group were issued with a legal writ and forced to destroy all remaining copies of the record. Other songs such as *Colchester Council* (1980) by Special Duties and *Nottingham Problem* (1983) by Resistance 77 targeted local government policy and the lack of venues for bands to play in their

local areas. The sleeve for the latter single features a photograph of the group standing in front of a local venue, which is itself advertising a concert by a classical orchestra, while the reverse of the sleeve paid tribute to the “*Somercotes, Jacksdale, Alfreton & Ripley Punx*”, naming four small towns to the north west of Nottingham. Interestingly, their antipathy toward their hometown was not all encompassing, and local allegiances ran deep – a year later, Resistance 77 recorded the single *You Reds* in tribute to their local football team. Local punk scenes also tended to be quite territorial, and outsiders could be treated with some suspicion: in common with football supporters, punks from adjacent towns tended to display the greatest rivalry, while those visiting from further afield were often welcomed into the local scene.

## Chewing out a rhythm on my bubble gum The sun is out and I want some It’s not hard, not far to reach We can hitch a ride to Rockaway Beach The Ramones: Rockaway Beach

In stark contrast to these highly critical punk voices, the sleeve for the Nuclear Socketts *Honour Before Glory* e.p. clearly demonstrates a positive regional stance, declaring the group “*West Norfolk’s finest*” and acknowledging “... *all the King’s Lynn kids whose enthusiasm has made this single possible*”. Examples such as these highlight something of a double edged sword in relation to local identity: groups often reflected local scenes, sang about local issues, credited the local ‘punx’ on their sleeves, and were photographed against local landmarks. However, their attitudes more often than not displayed an antipathy to the local council, authorities, landowners, pub landlords, and decried the fact that life is boring in their particular small town, thus displaying an interesting conflict between local pride and identity and the punk spirit of antagonism and opposition.

### In My Area

The emphasis given to London in the lyrics and titles of early punk releases was also reflected in the design of record sleeves. The Clash used photographs of confrontations between the police and crowds at the Notting Hill carnival in 1976 on the reverse sleeve of their debut album *The Clash* (1977), and featured photographs of punk youths in London streets for their fourth single *Clash City Rockers* (1978). The cover of the first Lurkers single, *Shadow* (1977), included a photograph of the group standing outside the Red Cow in Hammersmith, a popular early punk venue, while The Rings *I Wanna Be Free* (1977)

pictured the group in front of the Rock On record shop – the original home of the Chiswick label – and Menace’s *GLC* (1978) featured a torn photograph of the civic offices of the Greater London Council. In a humorous and self-deprecating manner firmly in tune with the anti-star status of the early punk groups, the reverse sleeve of Croydon group The Banned’s *Little Girl* (1977) incorporated a close-up photograph of stone-cut lettering from the South London H.M. Coroner’s office and a badge stating ironically “*Today Croydon, Tomorrow Bromley*”.

Once punk had developed into a widely popular style, visual associations such as these became more frequent, again mirroring the lyrical trend to first focus on London and later on regional locations. The sleeve of the third single by the Gang of Four, *Outside*

*The Trains Don’t Run On Time* (1980), designed by group members Jon King and Andy Gill, features a black and white publicity photograph of Leeds Town Hall. A further cutting of the building’s official description is reproduced on the centre record label, defiantly placing the band in a specific (northern England) location outside of London. Similarly, Stiff Little Fingers, a politically outspoken group from Northern Ireland, chose to use an image from the streets of Belfast on their second single, *Alternative Ulster* (1978). The black and white photograph depicts a British soldier in full body armour crouching, rifle in hand, while a small boy leans over a wall behind him, laughing at the camera.

The sense of locality expressed by individual groups was also reflected in the names and graphic approaches of punk-oriented record labels, particularly those created in direct response to the subculture. Clay Records, a label founded in 1980 by Mike Stone, a former employee at Beggars Banquet Records in London (itself an early punk-centred independent) who had just



relocated to Stoke in the north west of England and opened a local record shop, was one such example. The town of Stoke has a long historical association with the ceramics industry in England, and the 18th Century Staffordshire potteries of Josiah Wedgwood, Joseph Spode and Thomas Minton made the area world famous for high quality production, placing it at the forefront of the Industrial Revolution. The area around Stoke subsequently became known as “the Potteries”, a term which lasted well into the Twentieth Century, even when local industries were in decline and other manufacturing and service industries were becoming more important to the area. The municipality of Stoke-on-Trent brought together the boroughs of Hanley, Burslem, Longton and Stoke, and the districts of Tunstall and Fenton, in 1910, and Stoke-on-Trent gained city status in 1925. Local residents still refer to the area as the Potteries, recognising the historic distinctions between the six towns that make up the city. There are also numerous slang terms in the north west for the inhabitants of Stoke, including the terms “Stokies” and “Clay Heads” – the latter being a derogatory term used by inhabitants of the surrounding area, perpetuated through the ‘local derby’ football rivalry between Stoke City and Crewe Alexandra.

Stone’s identity for his new label, Clay Records, derives directly from these local associations. The centre labels of records released by Clay featured an illustration of three ‘bottle kilns’ set in perspective. From the 18th century until the 1960s, these brick chimneys were a dominating architectural feature of the Staffordshire Potteries, when over two thousand such structures had towered above the local skyline. The use of this image on the label identity therefore gives a strong local connection, which would be instantly recognisable to anyone familiar with the area. As Clay Records became more established, following chart success with early Hardcore record releases by local group Discharge and GBH from Birmingham, the label illustration was distilled further to create a simple graphic identity for the company.

This approach was not entirely new, and a number of other early independent punk labels had used their locality as a basis for a graphic identity. The Deptford Fun City label, based in South East London and home to Squeeze and ATV, was not only given an ironic name based on its location, but also used photographs of the local high street on record centre labels. The fact that the photographs were simply mundane ‘snap shots’, featuring dull shop fronts, advertising hoardings and to-let signs, only adds to the sense of ordinariness and boredom sarcastically implied in the label name. Similarly, Brighton label Attrix Records,



established by local record shop owner Rick Blair, used a stylised hand-drawn silhouette of the local skyline, featuring the neo-classical domes and minarets of the Royal Pavilion as both the company logo and on centre labels. It is interesting to note that the cutting of silhouettes had been a seaside tradition on the West Pier from its opening in 1866 through to the early 1970s, and their use on the Attrix identity and sleeve artwork thus reflected a local craft history. The Attrix label was to release three compilation albums documenting the local punk and new wave scene, entitled Vaultage ‘78, ‘79 and ‘80, named after The Vault, a local band rehearsal and performance space. The covers for *Vaultage* ‘78 and *Vaultage* ‘79 followed the silhouette theme, incorporating elements of the buildings incorporated in the label identity, together with the town’s central Clock Tower and Palace Pier, set against a brightly coloured two-tone wash background. The Vault, along with the Community Resource Centre within which it was based, was destroyed by a fire in early 1980, though the Attrix shop and label continued. With the third and final album in the series, *Vaultage* ‘80, the image changes to depict the West Pier, fallen into ruin and capped with spirals of barbed wire. The West Pier had closed in 1975 on the grounds of public safety, and had been subject to persistent local government wrangling regarding its future ever since. In the ensuing years, it fell rapidly into decay, and was fenced off to prevent access. The album artwork depicts the rooftops in the town as similarly distressed and ruined, reflecting a wider sense of decay and the decline of the West Pier as symbolic of the town itself and the disillusionment of local groups in response to the loss of their communal base.

#### Hicks From the Sticks

Punk’s visual style, like the music, was often aggressive and contemporary, reflecting and commenting on its surroundings. It was also, especially in regard to later developments, raw and untrained, employing a do-it-yourself graphic commentary that utilized crude visual conventions to drive the point home. Early UK punk followed a number of visual conventions and patterns of behaviour, drawn from ‘classic’ examples such as the first album covers of the Ramones, The Clash and the Sex Pistols (each employing different graphic approaches in themselves), together with a media-inspired connection to London and the inner city. Such codes and visual tropes were initially hard to break down, but subsequent developments of punk identity did go on to reflect a wider range of reflections on location, audience and cultural context. As punk became further established in its own right, punk identities



Nuclear Socketts *Honour Before Glory* EP (Subversive) 1980

*“I think the naïve dream of the late 70’s/ punk era was that the music industry came to you if you made a big enough noise, and nationally reported scenes were springing up in Manchester, Leeds and all sorts of places, and with the “local” independent label situation being probably the healthiest it’s ever been, decentralisation was the issue of the day, so like fucking idiots we just stayed put in Edinburgh.”*

#### Jo Callis, The Rezillos

became further embedded and sought to position themselves in relation to the ‘punk establishment’. These positions could be embracing of the myth of a coherent punk ideology and history, or oppositional in regard to the co-option of punk within the mainstream music industry. Regional punk identities embodied both approaches – an often ironic or satirical reflection on the group’s immediate environment, together with a reliance on support networks close to home and a sense of pride in their local identity.

#### International Development

But punk’s diaspora was also not limited to the UK or US, and parallel developments were happening around the globe. What would become known as punk scenes had been growing in Australia, France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium

and Scandinavia since the earliest days of a nascent UK punk movement, and even as punk in the UK reached its commercial peak and began to decline (at least in terms of its public profile), ‘punk’ was being discovered, invented or adapted in far-flung places below (Western) critical radar. There are now hundreds of variants of what might be termed ‘punk’ around the world, from as far afield as Eastern Europe to South America, South East Asia and the Himalayas, to the point that perhaps the catch-all term itself has become meaningless. Certainly there is evidence of a crossover of generations, with older punk bands still touring and producing records and newer participants evolving their own sounds and styles. Many contemporary punk concerts draw audiences from a wide range of ages and backgrounds – in many ways it is surprising how long-lasting that initial burst of

energy has endured, along with its sense of community, a term that appears alien at first glance to the history of the subculture.

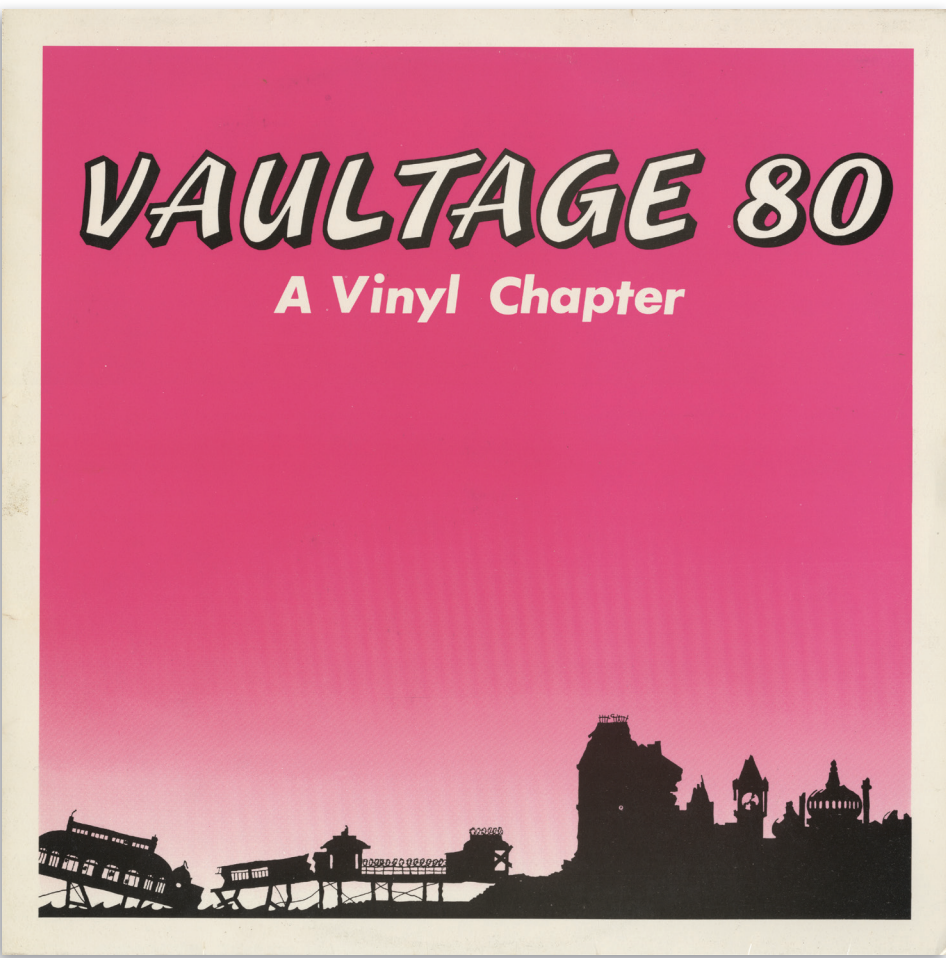
The impact of a harder-edged, more political Hardcore punk movement should not be underestimated in this regard – while early bearers of the punk banner traced their roots along similar lines to the early US and UK punks (primarily through garage rock and 60s R&B, tied to a do-it-yourself ethos) or set out to follow in the footsteps of the Ramones, Sex Pistols or Clash, a more widespread international hardcore scene was driven more by ideology and underground networks rather than aesthetics. Indeed, it could be argued that the DIY principles of US bands such as Black Flag, the Minutemen and Dead Kennedys – visiting towns and cities well off the standard rock touring circuit and playing shows in disused buildings and basements – along with the highly political Anarcho-Punk scene in the UK led by Crass and Poison Girls influenced the next generation of Hardcore punks in a similar way to the first wave diaspora, only in many ways it was even further-reaching.

Other punk sub-genres evolved in different directions. The sense of empowerment brought about by the do-it-yourself punk and Post-Punk scene played a major role in the growth of independent music more broadly – though the conflation of the term to ‘indie’ and the (partial) recuperation of that movement by the major labels goes some way to hide its more radical history from popular view. New Wave – in some respects denoting the re-appropriation of punk by the music industry, though perhaps more generously a way to describe the incorporation of avant-garde, experimental and angular styles within the pop music aesthetic, continues to hold at least some influence. Certainly the breadth and depth of pop and rock music styles have expanded well beyond traditional blues-based Rock ‘n’ Roll forms, and – while keeping a critical eye on the fact that popular music has always adapted and evolved – some of that radical experimentation (not least in terms of audience acceptance) can still be traced back to the punk explosion of the late 70s and early 80s.

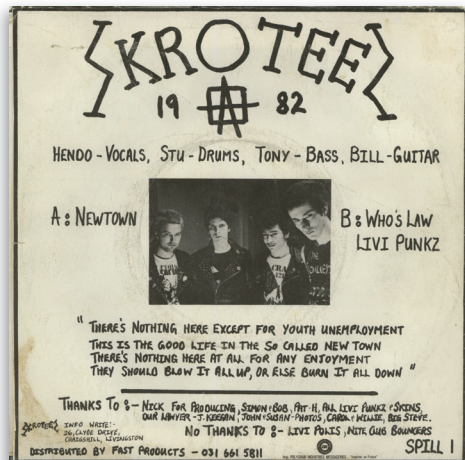
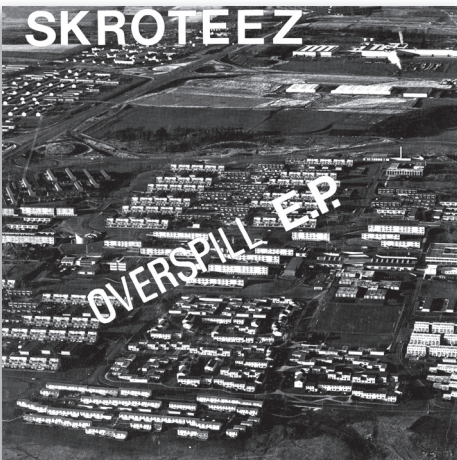
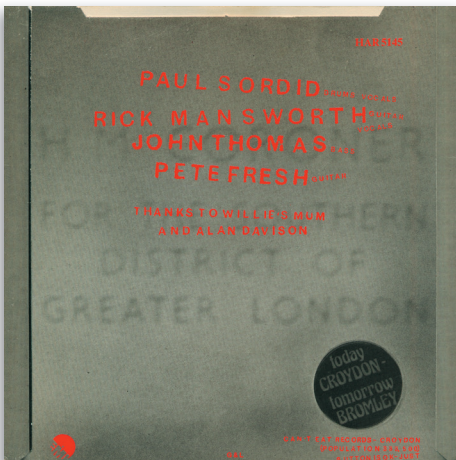
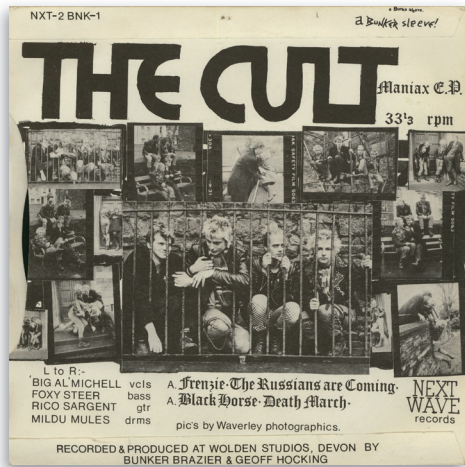
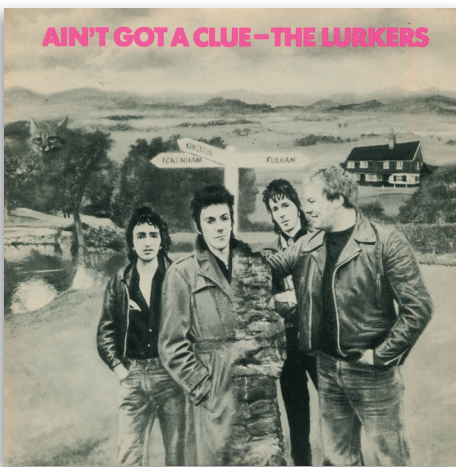
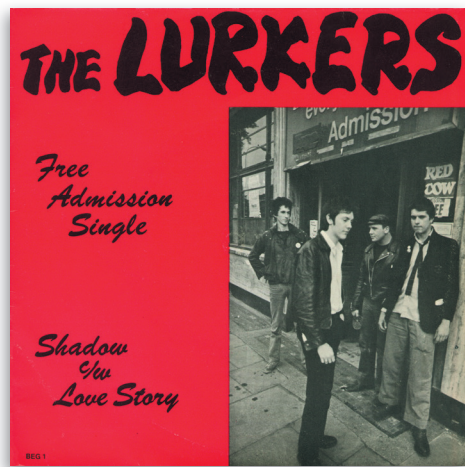
#### RUSS BESTLEY



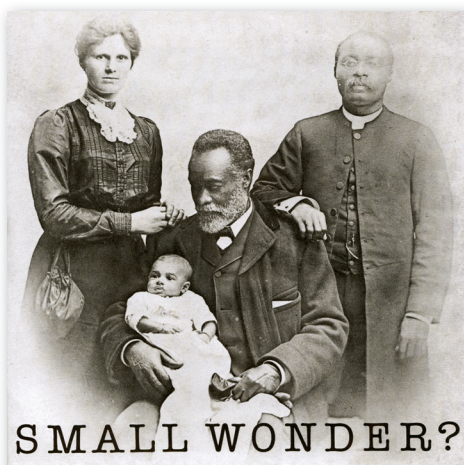
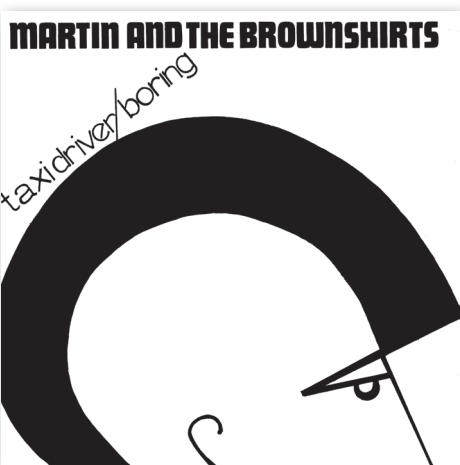
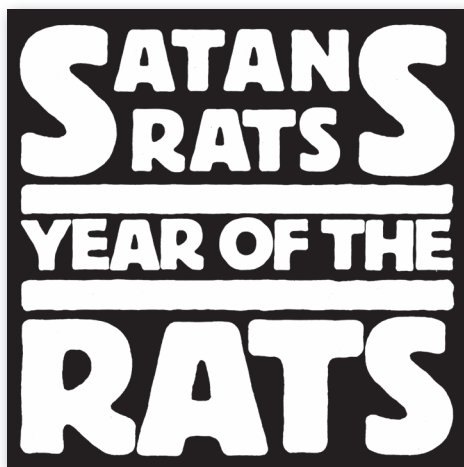
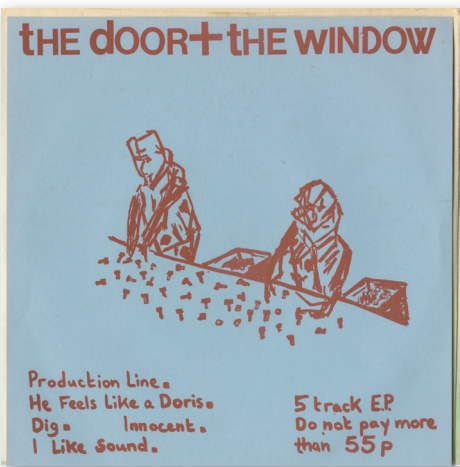
Various Artists *Vaultage 78: Two Sides Of Brighton* (Attrix Records) 1978



Various Artists *Vaultage 80: A Vinyl Chapter* (Attrix Records) 1980







# TALES FROM THE PUNKSIDE

PUNK IN THE PROVINCES talks to **GAYE BLACK (THE ADVERTS)**, **PAULINE MURRAY** and **PAUL HARVEY (PENETRATION)** and **GRAHAM FELLOWS (JILTED JOHN)** about *doing it themselves* and the provincial punk experience



**Where were you living when you first heard about what was to become known as the punk movement?**

**Pauline:** I was living with my parents on a council estate in Ferryhill, Co.Durham. The family moved to Ferryhill when I was 10 years old. I didn't know anyone and felt like an alien. I wrote all of the early Penetration lyrics including Don't Dictate in that particular house.

**Graham:** I was living in Sheffield, a polite, well behaved A level school pupil, with a passion for table tennis and Amateur Dramatics. I remember seeing a play in the Summer of '76 and the hero sported scruffy short hair and a sleeper in his left ear. I thought that was terribly daring and it awakened the punk in me. Sheffield seemed very slow to embrace punk rock. I'd been at school with Joe Eliot (Def Leppard) and as I discovered years later, Bruce Dickinson of Iron Maiden – so it was lucky I began a drama course at the Polytechnic in the much cooler city of Manchester in '77, home of Buzzcocks and (my soon to be) stablemates, Slaughter & the Dogs.

**Paul:** Burton-upon-Tent right in the heart of the Midlands. I was born there in 1960 so I was 16 when I started to hear about punk. Burton was all I knew.

**Gaye:** I think I did it in reverse, as I moved up to London before there was a punk scene in Bideford (if indeed there was anything subsequently), and then toured around small towns after having settled in the epicentre!

**Where and how did you make the connection with 'punk'?**

**Pauline:** I was a big Bowie fan in the mid 70s so had already been altered! My boyfriend was a vinyl junkie and used to send to the USA for imports, so I heard a lot of the American punk first – Iggy and the Stooges, New York Dolls, Television, Patti Smith, Blondie, The Ramones, Jonathan Richman – so was pretty much in the zone when I saw the Sex Pistols, The Damned, in 1976.

**Gaye:** I was in my second year of Graphic Design at Torquay art school 1973-4. One of my flat mates had Raw Power and The

Stooges and New York Dolls, which set me on the path, but it wasn't until the beginning of 1976 that the music papers started to mention the word 'punk' and the Sex Pistols. By then I had finished my third year and was living back at home with my parents in Bideford, Devon, where I had grown up. I couldn't wait to escape from the country and be able to see the bands and absorb the culture, and within a few months I had moved to London.

**Graham:** Although heavy metal (and disco to some extent) were all around me in Sheffield, I was seeking something new and edgy, and in Manchester it seemed more available. I also met Bernard Kelly (a proper punk and the man who played 'Gordon the Moron') who signed on, had his own bed sit and introduced me to all kinds of music, including Bob Dylan who seemed to be some kind of wise punk guru, and whose music at the time seemed as fresh and timely as any punk rock.

**Paul:** It was actually at school (Burton Grammar School, now the Abbot Beyne). We had a Sixth form common room with a record player and people would bring stuff in to play, usually Jethro Tull, Genesis, stuff like that. One day someone brought in the Anarchy single and that was it – my life changed. It was very immediate. I think the last album I had bought before hearing the Pistols was Status Quo's Blue For You. Pretty much all the records I had bought before hearing Anarchy I then got rid of, although I bought most of them back many years later, including Blue For You which I love.

**Did you feel that it was important to respond to 'punk' in an individual way, doing-it-yourself and creating your own music, artwork, clothes etc? Was that DIY message widespread in relation to punk at the time?**

**Pauline:** Yes! An old chapter was over and a new one had to be written – creating something out of nothing, looking forward not back. It was nihilistic but also extremely positive. There was nothing fit for purpose in the regular shops so you had to make/ customise clothes, write your own reviews, play your own music – express yourself on a

nonexistent budget. It was obvious that you had to DIY. Empowering for a young person.

**Graham:** Very much so. I was surprised by how violent people's reactions could be to a bit of eyeliner on a male face, or how the wearing of a dog collar could get you turfed out of a pub. It didn't matter how polite and nerdy you were in your behaviour (I still was really), some people were genuinely threatened by the way you looked, and the clothes you were, which I found hilarious. The DIY art ethic was exciting to someone who'd got used to revering expensive looking, overly ornate LP covers (usually prog rock ones) and the DIY ethic is one I continued for years, making all my early John Shuttleworth cassette covers by cutting up various magazine adverts.

**Gaye:** There was no sudden moment when I consciously decided to become punk, and because I had moved to London so early on, there was no punk scene in Devon. I generally wore black t shirts and jeans still, and the leather jacket that I'd borrowed from a friend of my then partner. I did start to wear the odd tie or shirt that I would get from jumble sales or charity shops, and customise clothes with stencils and stuff, echoing the 'Zappa is God' type slogans my friends and I had painted over our clothes aged 14! Anything that didn't cost much was ideal as I was always penniless. I would wear a razor blade as an earring, and a yard of bathroom chain made a cheap bracelet. I did get wristbands and a collar from Sex, and the pair of vinyl trousers I got there was my biggest investment.

**Paul:** This is a complex issue because it was both doing it yourself but also copying both the music and the style that we were seeing and hearing. I had already been playing in bands, writing a bit of our own stuff but also doing covers of Quo, Suzi Quatro, even Leo Sayer (One Man Band) around 1974, then later Paranoid and other heavier stuff just before I discovered punk. Even before punk though, British rock didn't really feel right to me and I felt I couldn't identify with it. I preferred pop. I don't think for me DIY was a big thing at first. However, the idea of forming your own band and doing that part of it yourself certainly

was. I formed a punk band pretty much immediately, with a drummer who couldn't play drums and a bass player who couldn't play bass. They had the right attitude though and learnt quickly, mostly through listening to the first Stranglers album.

**What was your experience of punk in your home town? Was there any direct relationship with what was happening in London?**

**Graham:** I didn't really visit London at the time so I can't comment on that. My guess is that in London it was a little more fashion led than up North. Oops, I've just commented, although I said I wouldn't...

**Pauline:** We were the only punks in the village and stood out just by the way we looked. There was animosity and we would sometimes get chased by local thugs. As the band started to get more well known, we got a brick through our window. We were informed by the (London) music press but most people in our town were oblivious to what was going on in London.

**Paul:** I didn't really know anyone who went to London to buy clothes or visit the Rough Trade shop – it was very local. All my friends changed, as hardly anyone at school got into it the way I did, so I ended up meeting new people at the local record shop (R.E. Chords) and the local music shop (Abbey Music). We hung around these places pretty much all day on a Saturday as well as the local shopping precinct. I had no idea that punk was fashion based – I really believed in it and took the anti-fashion stance. Badges and safety pins was what it was all about for me, although obviously that was a fashion stance of a kind, but also what the academics think of as bricolage. I dislike that term though as it has a condescending sound to me.

**As punk grew and became more widely understood, what was your experience of it across the country? Were there any places that stood out as interesting or unique, or awful and negative?**

**Gaye:** Having got used to life in London, fraught as it was with the dangers of



encounters with Teds and random nutters, there was always the danger of the unexpected in smaller towns and cities when we started touring. Some gigs on the long Damned/Adverts tour in 1977 got cancelled due to punk's growing reputation and the fall out from the Sex Pistols/Bill Grundy interview, and some saw actual violence from gangs of locals with small town mentalities. One place that left an indelible mark on our minds was Lincoln, where locals tried to batter their way in to the venue, and vandalised our minivan in the alley where it was parked outside.

**Pauline:** In the early days, we travelled to London, Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield playing with bands like The Fall, Adverts, Generation X, Stranglers, Vibrators. The audiences were small, people getting into early punk. Then there was a phase where the audience started spitting which was pretty disgusting. As the crowds started to grow, skinhead types turned up to instigate violence and the NF reared its ugly head. The punks counteracted this with the Rock Against Racism movement. In the early days I thought Erics in Liverpool was a cool venue and they did matinee shows for the under 14s.

**Paul:** Until I left home in 1978 to go to North Staffs Polytechnic, I'd hardly travelled on my own. Leicester was the furthest I got, to see the Stranglers. Most of the gigs we went to were at the Kings Hall in Derby (Clash, Jam, Adverts, Boomtown Rats, Eddie & the Hot Rods), where the local Teds would always be waiting for us. I think I experienced every provincial cliché, getting attacked in Chinese takeaways, being laughed at in the streets for wearing drainpipes, the usual stuff. When I was at the Poly, Stoke had a good punk scene and embraced it although it could be violent at times, like most provincial towns and cities. We also travelled to Manchester later on from 1978 onwards. I always felt Manchester was a bit different, although I wasn't sure why at the time. Looking back it probably didn't have the naivety that places like Burton had – or perhaps it was just me that was naïve.

**Graham:** Well... Since you ask, I remember going into a pub in Ludlow (a sleepy stuffy little town in Shropshire) in the Summer of 79 with my Asian punk friend, Jimmy, and before we could order a drink, the barman said "There's no point in asking, I'm not going to serve you." I was genuinely shocked and surprised by that, as he was like 2 years late in seeing us as a threat? I replied, "Well, we'll see what the police have to say about that!" and flounced out. It's all I could think of at the time, and of course we didn't go and find a copper – we just got into my Citroen 2CV and drove off.

Punk became 'mainstream', and punk clothes etc were widely available from commercial outlets or via mail order from mid 1977 onwards. How did this have an impact on punk?

**Gaye:** As punk clothes became more widely available to buy, the movement became more generic and less individual. To a certain extent this had been the case from the outset, as Vivienne Westwood's shop was the birthplace of the Sex Pistols, and her designs were integral to the movement, but as these styles became more widely available, it became like a uniform that could be donned by 'weekend punks'.

**Pauline:** What started out as an organic, innocent expression of creativity soon started to become a caricature where the main points were extracted, magnified and presented negatively as usual by the mainstream media. Businesses could see that there was money to be made from punk and the clothing became an identifying uniform. When things become set in stone, minds close up again, so it's more about what you think than what you wear. When it becomes a mainstream phenomenon, the individual loses control of the narrative.

**Paul:** It didn't have much impact on me – I can't remember anyone I knew sending off for clothes from ads in the back of the NME. We got our stuff from charity shops and Army & Navy stores because it was cheap. I do however remember being annoyed when the style became more mainstream and 'normal' people started wearing it. This was around the time of the Leyton Buzzards and stuff like that. I started to drift towards the Mod thing but I soon came back.

**Graham:** Negative, definitely. It's like I remember doing a bit of karaoke somewhere in London in 1987 with a couple of weird Japanese ladies who had a mic and a cassette deck. It seemed a slightly edgy activity at the time, because nobody in the UK knew what it was. Same with punk. As soon as fashion professionals were embracing it to make money, the whole thing became a parody of itself and a bit pointless, and – for anyone trying to shock or challenge convention – less appealing.

**Penetration, the Adverts and Jilted John all signed contracts with major record labels. Did you feel that you were still able to maintain artistic control over your music, artwork and visual style etc? Was it a sacrifice from a 'pure' DIY independent stance, or were there positive advantages?**

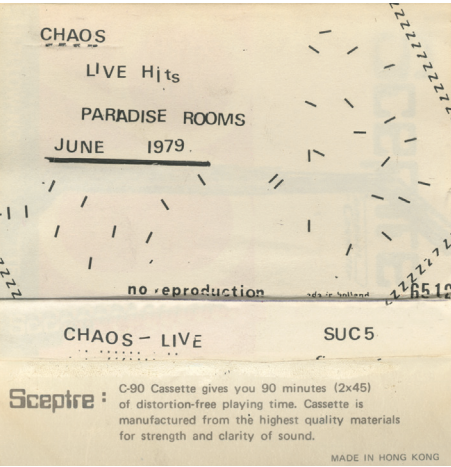
**Pauline:** In 1977 the major record labels and media controlled all the outlets. There was no national independent distribution network set up at the time. To be independent, you had to raise money to record your songs, raise money to manufacture a 7" single and hope that independent record shops would take a few copies. Spiral Scratch was the perfect example and there's much satisfaction to be gained from this approach but times were tough. The major companies didn't like punk but knew there was a growing demand. The advantages of signing to a major, was that this all got done and they had extensive distribution and advertising so more people got to hear the band. We didn't like

the sleeve to Don't Dictate and the luminous vinyl made the album crackle, but apart from that we mainly did our own thing without too much interference. The disadvantage was that you had to keep to their schedules, which was the antipathy of what punk espoused.

**Gaye:** I don't think we had a lot of control even when we were on an independent label, but we certainly had less when we moved to a major label. The chap who signed us to RCA left shortly afterwards, and no one else there had much interest in us.

**Graham:** It was a sacrifice, definitely, from an artistic point of view, but when your single's racing up the charts and only a major label can supply the distribution you urgently need, you feel grateful. Double-edged sword, I guess.

**Paul:** I was as far away from signing a record contract in 1977 as I was in 1974. My punk band (The Two Way Mirrors) was never going to make it (not when you're doing Boomtown Rats covers), and we didn't know enough or have enough money to release our own single. Consequently I had total control over



everything! My ideas were pretty much ripped off from Jamie Reid, although I didn't really take much notice of his name at the time. Designers were faceless to me then. I certainly never came across the word 'Situationism'. Once my own band split up, I joined a band called Chaos. There must have been a band called Chaos in every town in the country, so this was another cliché I lived. The singer Dave, was one of the best people I met during this time and taught me a lot. He loved the Buzzcocks song 'Fast Cars'. He died some while back but I remember him fondly, and still have a live gig at the Galaxy pub in Burton on cassette where we did a version of Autonomy. 35 years later I got to play with John Maher (Buzzcocks drummer) on the Penetration Resolution album and for some live gigs, although I never played him the tape – not that it wasn't a great version!

**What are your views on the punk 'anniversary' events over the past year or so, and the increasing interest in punk 'nostalgia'?**

**Gaye:** It's good that there is still interest in the punk movement, and recognition of its original impact and enduring legacy, with recent 'anniversary' events and exhibitions at such august institutions as the British Library and the Museum of London, and the new blue plaque on the site of the Roxy club. No doubt the corporate events would have horrified us as teenagers, and we would never have imagined that forty years later punk would still be in the spotlight and if anything, becoming more influential with every year that passes.

**Graham:** I obviously think it's great, because here I am in Whitley Bay, delighted to be opening for a legend like Pauline Murray and Penetration. I met Captain Sensible last year in Blackpool at the Rebellion Festival. He was very polite and seemed quite well groomed. Maybe me and him should go back to that pub in Ludlow and see if we get served – we probably would, and be mildly disappointed by that.

**Paul:** On the whole I've enjoyed it, although one or two punk 'celebrities' do tend to get on my nerves (they shall remain nameless). It's been great to see Pauline and Penetration finally get the respect they deserve, as I think the band encapsulates everything about punk attitude. They did it and continue to do it their own way. Back in the day they made their own music that was a true reflection of all the individuals in the band, and this music continues to amaze me after all these years. They didn't give a shit about what anyone thought. We still try to work in the same way. What really pisses me off is when individuals come along and try to appropriate punk for their own ends, as well as trying to rewrite history to suit their own agenda. Bollocks to all of them, although they shall also remain nameless (there's probably too many to mention anyway).

**Pauline:** I didn't like the way the London establishment instigated the 40 years of punk celebrations especially with Boris Johnson's name attached. They never liked punk and it seemed ironic – almost like they could put it in its place and be in control of the final narrative. I was asked to speak at some events and decided to take part as someone who had participated from the start, as a female and as a northerner. Our own band will celebrate the 40 years (from 1977) but that will be it. Time to move on.

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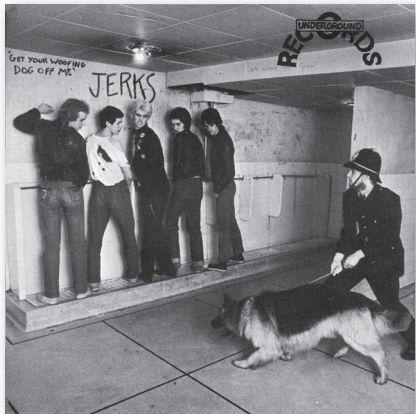
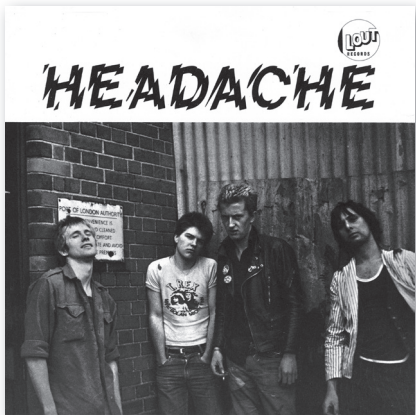
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